

# **THE EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION REGARDING WORK PERFORMANCE**

*The Case of Staff Members in KMS Technology Corporation*

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**Objectives:** The main purpose of this study is to answer the question whether mindfulness meditation training should be implemented to the workplace. In order to provide profound solutions to the inquiry, the thesis attempts to first identify the advantages and disadvantages of meditation practice, then discover the benefits, costs and challenges associated with mindfulness training, and finally explore the commonalities and differences in viewpoints of meditators and non-meditators on such programs in relation to work productivity.

**Summary:** This thesis, with specific case study on KMS Technology Corporation, employs interview qualitative methodology to achieve the previous objectives. Total 11 participants were interviewed in which 8 are meditators and 3 are non-meditators. An interview session then occurs following a semi-structured form in order to understand the participants' perceptions of advantages, disadvantages and challenges associated with meditation technique in general and its implementation to the workplace in particular.

**Conclusions:** Given all the benefits, costs and issues of meditation that have been elaborated in the literature review as well as findings and discussion, the answer for the question whether companies should implement the mindfulness session into the workplace is: it depends. It depends on the physical and mental characteristics of employees and on organizational culture to safeguard the factor of suitability. Meditation training in the workplace is like others interventions in which each has both positive and negative sides. It is indeed about the seriousness of employers in implementing the practice and their way of holding meditative session that make the difference. They have to be careful to evaluate all the pros, cons and challenges associated with the intervention as stated above. Moreover, they have to be prudent not to become overreliant on the mindfulness technique or misuse it in the workplace. Eventually, if the company decides to bring it into the office, they should make sure that they have sufficient resources such as experienced teachers and physical space to organize the interventions as well as a mature operational framework that has been shown to be effective and applicable. The organizations are also recommended to combine meditation training with other recreational activities to enhance the overall well-being of the workers, such as yoga, sports and retreats.

**Key words:** *meditation, mindfulness, training, perceptions, employees, stress, advantages, disadvantages, challenges, non-meditator*

**Language:** English

**Grade:**

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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Background and Research Problem**

People invariably go to the gym, practice yoga or do aerobic exercise in order to stay fit and healthy. Although the physical state, or the body, is greatly emphasized and focused in terms of fitness and healthiness, it is not the only aspect contributing to overall well-being. Indeed, mental health is generally acknowledged to be so important that it should not be overlooked and ignored, especially when being put in a fast-moving social modern situation. The fact that the level of demand, complexity and competitiveness is exponentially rising in business is attributed to the fast-paced growth of globalization as well as technology. The company can suffer a substantial loss in profit within a moment of negligence. Moreover, the countless courses of projects, presentations and deadlines have put intense time pressure on employees. They sometimes have no choice but working with difficult collaborators, colleagues and insupportable managers, which even worsens their level of stress.

Veritably, stress constitutes more than 50 percent of sickness as well as disease of the human body and is America's number one proxy killer (American Psychological Association, 2012). Consequently, corporations around the globe have been constantly looking for solutions for working distress. Some of them then employ a practice that is both cost-saving and effectual in coping with stress: mindfulness meditation (Hyland et al., 2015; Malinowski & Lim, 2015; Seppala, 2015).

Contrary to a few decades ago when people still saw meditation as religious terminology practiced by only nuns and monks, a burgeoning body of researches have demystified meditation and mindfulness. Meditation has been proved to be not only favorable for physiological and psychological conditions, but also act as an impediment to suffering from stresses and strains (Davidson et al., 2003; Mrazek et al., 2008, Foureur et al., 2013; Krygier et al., 2013). Therefore, it is highly recommended that enterprises and firms integrate mindfulness training programs into their organizations. However, there is little empirical investigation into the benefits of meditation sessions in the occupational settings and from the viewpoints of employees (Dane & Brummel, 2013; Brendel, 2017).

## 1.2 Significance of the Study

Although there are ample researches into the benefits of meditation on physiological and psychological states, there are few practical inquiries examining mindfulness meditation from a workplace standpoint. There might be a few cases in which mindfulness training does more harm than good. How and when to apply mindfulness meditation to a HR employee development program should be evaluated carefully, especially in a dynamic work situation with people from diverse backgrounds. In fact, inappropriate implementation of such training could create bad impressions on staff members and prevent them from joining more sessions in the future. Thus, this thesis aims to fill the gap and provide the CEOs and executives both pros and cons of implementing meditation practice to their organizations with regard to the viewpoints of employees from possibly multiple interviews. Accordingly, they can then have a better understanding of methodologies as well as strategies to introduce mindfulness training to their HR development programs.

## 1.3 Research Questions & Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to answer the following question:

**Should the company implement mindfulness meditation training to the workplace?**

In order to provide profound answers to the inquiry, this thesis attempts to first identify the origins and advantages of meditation, then discover whether offering mindfulness training programs to employees will generate positive results, and finally explore the perceptions of employees on meditation as well as such programs on their work performance. The research questions then include:

- *Question 1:* What are the perceived benefits and costs of practicing mindfulness meditation in terms of work performance and other relaxation techniques?
- *Question 2:* What are the employees' perceptions of the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of mindfulness session program incorporated in their companies? The case at KMS Technology.
- *Question 3:* What are the commonalities and differences in perspectives of staff members regarding mindfulness and productivity performance between employees who meditate frequently and those who do not?

Accordingly, the paper would like:

- To discover how meditation practice and such programs may either benefit or limit employee's productivity and well-being at work.
- To explore the perceptions of staff members on the benefits, costs and challenges of mindfulness intervention on their work performance through the interview with employees in the KMS Technology Corporation and other meditators.
- To compare the perceptions in terms of meditation and productivity performance of employees who meditate frequently versus those who do not.

## **1.4 Structure of the Thesis**

With the purpose of finding answers for the research questions above, a Literature Review will be immediately introduced under this introduction chapter to explore brief history of mindfulness meditation, current definitions and contrasting conceptualizations, and especially the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of implementing meditation program into corporations. The Methodology chapter will then follow to explain the process of data collection and analysis. After that, the results will be presented without interpretation in the Findings chapter, which will consequently lead to new insights and understanding of the topic in light of literature review in the Findings section. This paper will be finalized with the main findings that aim to answer the stated research questions along with limitations and suggestions for future research.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

As stated above, interest in mindfulness meditation practice and how it can be applied into corporations has been increasing since the last century. However, for the understanding and practical application of a theory, a theoretical framework and literature review are required to be thoroughly researched. Respectively, the conceptual framework and definitions of mindfulness, meditation, work performance and the context in which it is integrated in occupational settings should be examined prior to any further investigation and discussion. With the purpose of providing a clear



and comprehensive image, the literature review has been organized in such way in this chapter.

Firstly, the literature review is introduced with a brief history of mindfulness meditation, followed by the growing interest in mindfulness in contemporary organizations; the conceptual overview and the difference between two terms; contrasting conceptualizations of mindfulness; and the operational definition of mindfulness meditation. Secondly, the benefits have been reviewed, with a particular focus on recent findings and developments in research as well as the key work-related rewards of practicing mindfulness and meditation. Thirdly, whether to implement mindfulness training to the workplace has been evaluated with the advantages and disadvantages, controversies, questions as well as challenges. Finally, the literature review will be concluded with a conceptual frame connecting essential pave the way for the following steps of the this study.

## **2.1 Brief History of Mindfulness Meditation**

For hundred years, philosophers and wise men have proclaimed widely over the rewards of mindfulness and meditation – a mental condition in which the attention and consciousness are held exclusively in the present moment (Dane, 2011). Despite the significant history, scientists in the western world have not paid weighty attention to the contemplative practice until recently. According to Brown et al. (2007), the influence started to become profound when Jon Kabat-Zinn, an American molecular biologist, launched Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program over 8 weeks in 1979. The program was established as a stress reduction tool for the chronical ill, and since then mindfulness has generated a myriad of new practitioners and researchers.

In fact, over the past decades, there has been a boom in interest in the conceptions of “meditation” and “mindfulness” although they are often identified with customs that are more philosophical than scientific. The research surrounding mindfulness and meditation and the benefits of such practice have been highlighted across several fields, such as clinical and counselling psychology, social and personal psychology, neuroscience, medicine, education and workplace (Dane & Brummel, 2013). Nonetheless, the research area is relatively young up till now. Krusche et al. (2012)

illustrates this point by showing that previous research mainly focused on assessing the clinical effects of MBSR program, and few research activities were conducted on other mindfulness courses that last in shorter periods of time. Thus, it may seem that most of the available investigations are primarily from a medical perspective.

## **2.2 Migration of Mindfulness Meditation from Spiritual Sphere to Economic Sphere**

The reason why there is a growing popularity of researches about mindfulness meditation is because they have been shown to provide especially both physical and psychological benefits. In fact, Mills (2005) has strongly stated that health is a matter of the utmost importance in achieving not only individuals' targets, but also in promoting society's economic and social welfares. Although the physical state, or the body, is greatly emphasized and focused in terms of fitness and healthiness, it is not the only aspect contributing to overall well-being. Mental health is indeed generally acknowledged to be so significant that it should not be overlooked and ignored, especially when being put in a fast-moving social modern situation. The fact that the level of demand, complexity and competitiveness is exponentially rising in business is attributed to the fast-paced growth of globalization as well as technology. Moreover, the countless courses of projects, presentations and deadlines have put intense time pressure on employees. They sometimes have no choice but working with difficult collaborators, colleagues and insupportable managers, which even worsens their level of stress. Consequently, corporations around the globe have been constantly looking for solutions for working distress. Some of them then employ a practice that is both cost-saving and effectual in coping with stress: mindfulness meditation (Hyland et al., 2015; Malinowski & Lim, 2015; Seppala, 2015).

Contrary to a few decades ago when people still saw meditation as religious terminology practiced by only nuns and monks, a burgeoning body of researches has demystified meditation and mindfulness. Meditation has been proved to be not only favorable for physiological and psychological conditions, but also act as an impediment to suffering from stresses and strains. Since mindfulness is non-sectarian in form and encompasses eclectic religious backgrounds, there is no religious discrimination in mindfulness training; anyone can practice and incorporate the method into their frenzy

of daily lives (Hyland et al., 2015). Therefore, it is highly recommended that enterprises and firms integrate the practice into their organizations. For example, enterprises comprising Google (Kelly, 2012) and General Mills (Gelles, 2012) have established mindfulness training interventions so as to improve the staff members' well-being and job performance. Jha et al. (2010) also provides another instance with the U.S. Army and their positive results with the Mindfulness-based Mental Fitness program. Some of the graduate schools such as Harvard Business School, the Stern School of Business at NYU and the Drucker School of Business have as well integrated formal mindfulness programs to underpin their students' welfare and success (Hyland et al., 2015). However, there is little empirical investigation into the benefits of meditation in the occupational settings (Dane & Brummel, 2013; Brendel, 2017).

## **2.3 Conceptual Overview and the Difference between “Meditation” and “Mindfulness”**

### **2.3.1 Meditation**

Meditation is a spiritual technique that has been practiced for a very long time and has increased in the use these days for other causes. Although the origins are unknown, meditation has been supported and practiced by adherents of several religions in India area, such as Jainism, Brahmanical Hinduism and especially Buddhism (McNaughton, 2003). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that those Indian religions are not the only ones that encourage the contemplative practices to assist spiritual development. As stated by Plante (2010), most religions have practices entailing movement, stillness, focus and visualization. Despite the fact that it has been essentially an Eastern phenomenon, meditation is expeditiously spreading to the West and truly becoming a worldwide incident with over 50 million meditators around the globe, and a multitude of books as well as workshops on meditation (Lukoff et al., 1993; Kelly, 1996).

The definitions of meditation have been varied with each distinctive author, researcher, practitioner and teacher. While James (1950: 424) in his *Principles of Psychology*, defined meditation as “voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention over and over again”, McGreal (1995) claimed that the practice is the shifting of the focus and awareness from the outside back to the inside, and by looking within, feelings, habits and inclinations themselves will be surpassed to a point where all experiences are

unified. Furthermore, meditation is described by Walsh (1982: 77) as the “conscious training of attention aimed at modifying mental processes so as to elicit enhanced states of consciousness and well-being”. Therefore, those variations in the meditative interpretation can hamper the categorization as well as reaching the conclusive and general definition. However, McNaughton (2003) has attempted to loosely classify meditation into three types through his research: concentrative, mindfulness (awareness/insight) and integrated. Concentrative meditation refers to a technique in which all of the concentration is placed on one point or thing (Tart, 1975), such as Raja Yoga or Transcendental Meditation. In mindfulness meditation, thoughts, sensations and/or the events around the meditator are watched vigilantly, continuously and successively. Lastly, integrated meditation is a combination of the previous two techniques (Goleman, 1988).

It is also worth noting that there are two distinct conceptualizations in meditation: state mindfulness and trait (dispositional) mindfulness. State mindfulness happens when people participate in a meditation-based training program because they are supposed to experience the state of being mindful immediately and directly. Furthermore, the outcomes of such training will presumably transform into something more long-lasting and have a mindful impact on their lives, which is often referred to as dispositional or trait mindfulness (Malinowski, 2015). In terms of trait mindfulness, Creswell et al. (2007) highlight its significant benefits on physical health as well as cerebral activities, which will be explored further in the literature review.

### **2.3.2 Mindfulness**

Similar to meditation, mindfulness also has varying definitions, with disparate schools of thought underlying definite characteristics of mindfulness. The term “mindfulness” originates from the Pali language and normally denotes the presence of mind in terms of consciousness (Nyaniponika, 1973). One of the famous venerable masters, Thich Nhat Hanh (2009) has defined mindfulness as a practice that commences with concentration and sequentially leads to insight and enlightenment. Weick and Sutcliffe (2006) also states that individuals can achieve this state through the process of maintaining consciousness only in the present. Such consciousness is the fundamental activities of mindfulness and is followed by awareness and attention.

Awareness is the most immediate and direct contact with the reality and the conscious registration of stimuli, such as the five bodily sensations and the thoughts of the mind. Attention will then be engaged if the awareness becomes strong enough for the brain to take notice or to turn toward to subject (Brown et al., 2007).

Brown et al. (2007) have also successfully outlined the outstanding characteristics of mindfulness with their extensive research, including:

- “Clarity of Awareness
- Nonconceptual, Nondiscriminatory Awareness
- Flexibility of Awareness and Attention
- Empirical Stance toward Reality
- Present-oriented Consciousness
- Stability or Continuity of Attention and Awareness”

Such features should not be regarded as distinct elements as they are overlapping and mutually supportive to each other (ibid).

### **2.3.3 The Difference Between “Mindfulness” and “Meditation”**

Conze (1956) and Kabat-Zinn (2014) have emphasized mindfulness training, one of the three types of meditation mentioned above playing a significant role in the Asian and Buddhist culture of the millenium. Mindfulness as a specific condition is performed through meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), whereas within Buddhism, they are often interlinked. However, mindfulness and meditation still remain as two separate terms in other cases (Dane, 2011). The two terms are normally regularly used and referred in the studies about overall health. The debate over the discrepancies between mindfulness and meditation is likely to continue although there have been numerous attempts to differentiate their meanings. In fact, they are often overlapping and complete each other, but each has its own typical objective and definition simultaneously (Kabat-Zinn, 2014; Winter, 2016).

Firstly, mindfulness is one of the three types of meditation as previously introduced. While concentrative meditation refers to the practice of paying attention to only one point, mindfulness meditation signifies the holistic observation of both external and internal stimuli. Meditation, on the other hand, encompasses the practice of reaching

ultimate and impartial view of reality, cultivating compassion, admitting the cerebral current activities and self-regulating them. With regard to the technique, “mindfulness” is therefore a much more specific term than “meditation” (Winter, 2016). Secondly, meditation is often associated with religious or spiritual training whilst mindfulness is distinctively secular in form. As a result, mindfulness has congenitally become of a greater appeal to the scientific as well as the business communities than other kinds of meditation practices (Kabat-Zinn, 2014; Winter, 2016).

## **2.4 Contrasting Conceptualizations of Mindfulness Meditation**

Noteworthy in the regard of theoretical overview of mindfulness is the discussion of varying and even contrasting conceptualizations of it. Firstly, there has not been a concrete translation of mindfulness characteristics into contemporary research psychology (Brown et al., 2007). Although the clinical practice and research have effectively engendered mindfulness intervention in the “treat package” to the clients with distinctive definitions and novel operationalizations, they may become further from the intrinsic capacity of the mind, which is the utmost quality of mindfulness (Goldstein, 2002). Secondly, mindfulness can be seen to be closely related with other theories of awareness and attention, as well as the value of bringing consciousness to the subjective behavior, experience and immediate environment (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Thirdly, mindfulness and reflexive self-consciousness share similarities in strength and direction in which the inclination to “look inside” is fundamental to healthy self-regulation. Additionally, the two conceptualizations mainly differ from each other in the quality or the nature of attention employed (Brown et al., 2007). Lastly, in conjunction with the previous theory of reflexive self-consciousness, mindfulness is closely linked with the integrative awareness concept. Veritably, the theory is represented as a synthetic, organized, integrative and non-judgemental observation of both internal and external occurrence so as to facilitate the whole well-being and adaptation (Ryan, 1995).

Another notable line of research of Langer (1989: 138) is needed with consideration in terms of an alternative definition of mindfulness as an “active information processing”. There is a number of foundational differences between such definition and those conceptualizations mentioned above, even though they also bear some resemblances.

For instance, the author highlights that mindfulness demands classifying, forming opinions and even problem solving, which are incompatible with the ideas of acceptance and non-discriminating. Langer (1989) therefore warned the readers not to compare between those conceptualizations rooted in Buddhist position and her own denotation. Keeping that in mind, the author's research and approach will not be further analyzed for the rest of this literature review.

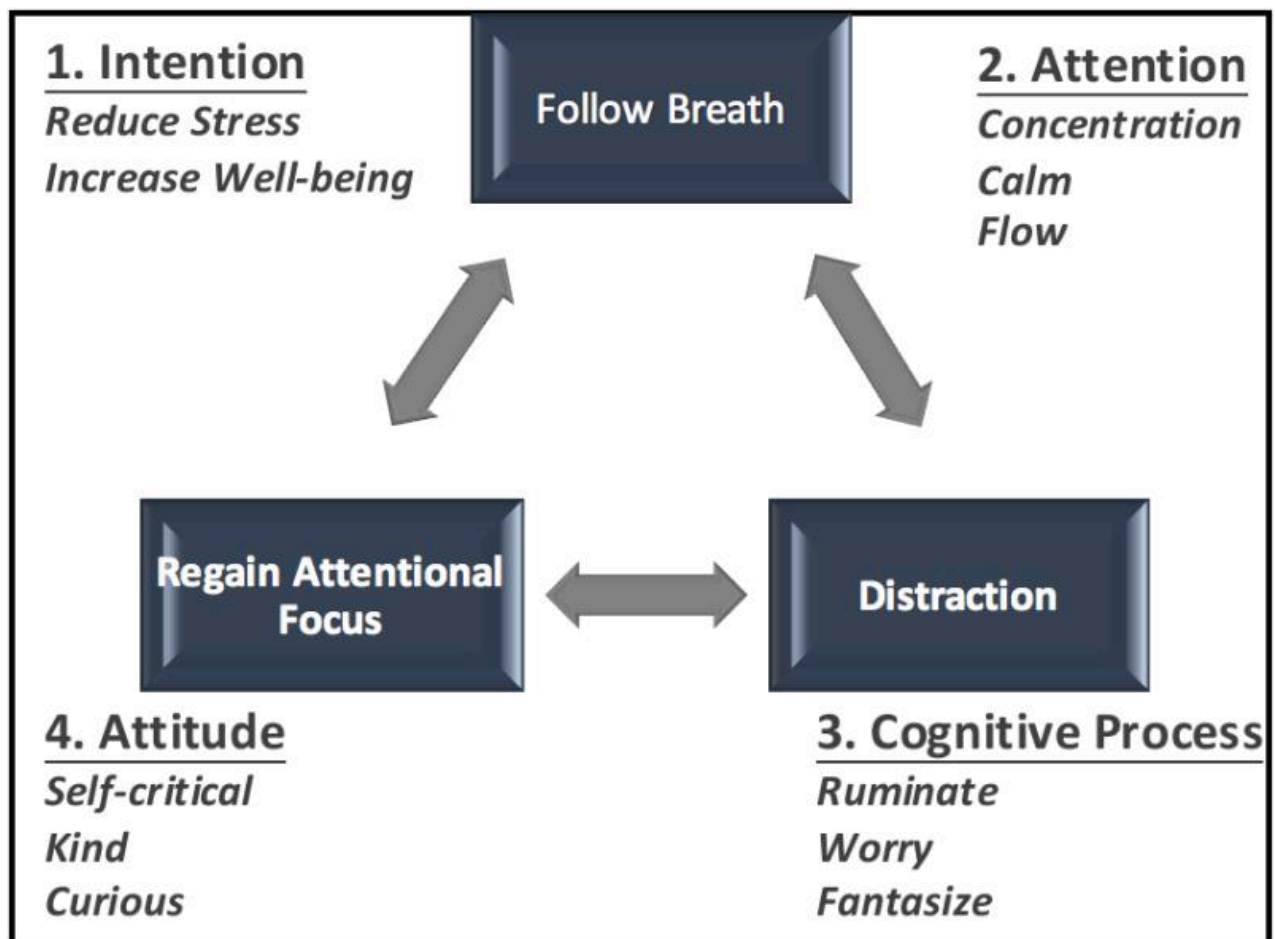
## **2.5 A Working Definition of Mindfulness Meditation**

The versatility of definitions of mindfulness has been reflected through the analysis of this literature review with diverse conceptualization examples. This is also indicated in the complex report scales of mindfulness measure, ranging from one element (Walach et al., 2006) to five (Baer et al., 2006). A consensus in concepts and interpretation of mindfulness to foster communication about the research design might be an inevitable consequence of such diversity. It could also help establish a secure and steady program for the fundamental and applied research to thrive in this contemporarily investigative field.

For simplification, this paper will use "meditation" and "mindfulness" as two interchangeable terms and mainly concern itself with the mindfulness type of meditation, also known as "mindfulness meditation". This is due to the fact that they both mean paying "full" attention to the presence, including internal and external stimuli, without any contemplation on either the past or the future. In particular, meditators are so "full" of the present insofar as there is no space for discrimination and judgement. They merely and receptively observe thoughts and sensations occurring in a meditation session, thereby not showing any reactions to them. Specifically, Brown et al. (2007) define mindfulness as "a receptive attention to and awareness of present moment events and experiences". The definition is one of the most commonly cited conceptualizations since it comprises all three key elements of meditation: present-focused awareness, external and internal attention, and receptive observation without any judgements, reactions or manipulations (Hyland et al., 2015).

In addition, the process of mindfulness meditation illustrated in the Figure 1 of Chade-Meng (2012: 268) below can be considered as clear and straightforward. First, the

mindfulness engagement begins with an intention (1) or a reason, such as to reduce stress or to increase well-being. Psychological practice and disposition will then be reinforced every time an intention is initiated. Second, attention (2) is converged. This is also when the mind becomes calm, concentrates and flows with the breath. The third stage is the distraction stage with cognitive process (3) in which the rumination, worries and imagination might happen. At this stage, attentional focus is required to retrieve by bringing attention back to the process of breathing. The crucial motivation from the beginning becomes important and encourages practitioners to continue rather than relinquishing. When an appropriate attitude (4) is established with self-criticism, self-compassion and curiosity, an insight into the practice is fostered and strengthened little by little.

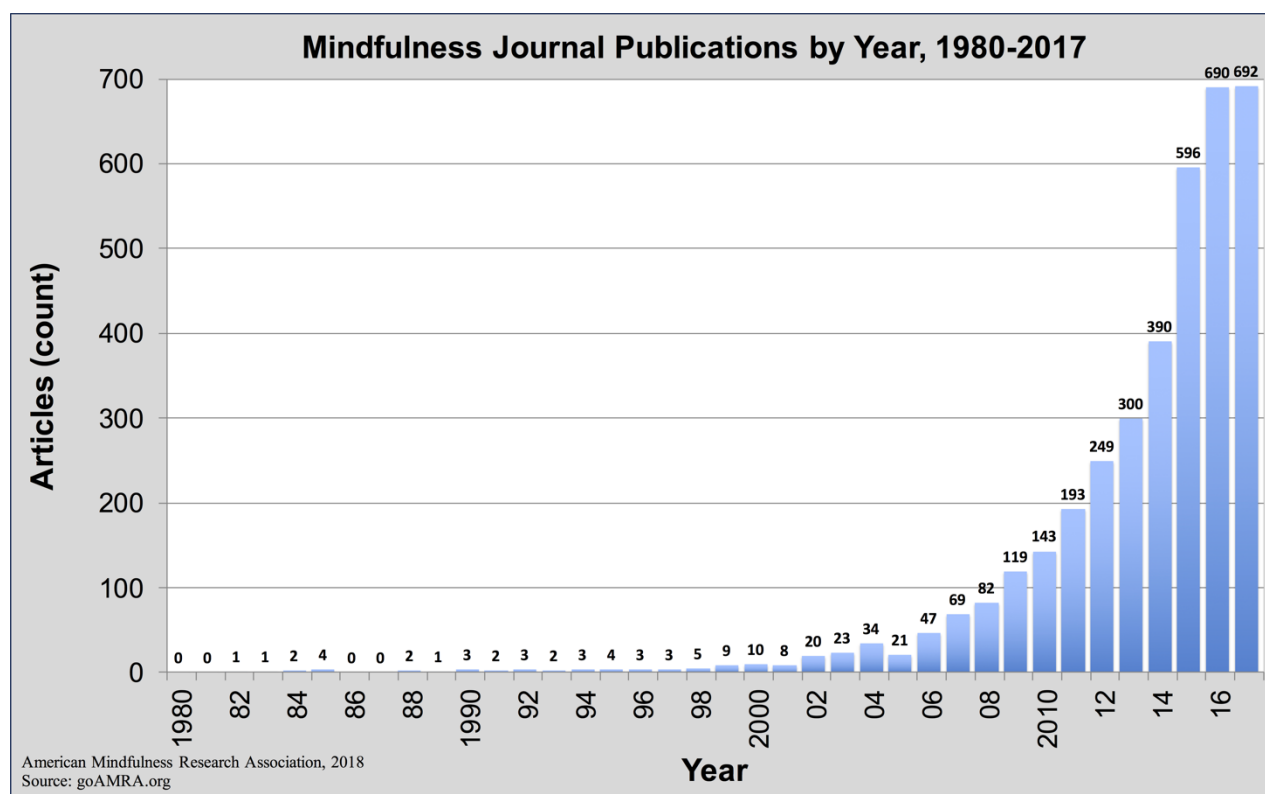


**Figure 1:** Process Model of Mindfulness Meditation (Chade-Meng, 2012: 268)



## 2.6 Recent Findings of Mindfulness Meditation Benefits: Developments in Research

Figure 2 below illustrates how mindfulness has been burgeoning with researches over the years. As specified by American Mindfulness Research Association (AMRA) (2018), when the mindfulness was first presented to the western world in the 1980s with the MBSR program by Kabat-Zinn (1982), only a few investigations had been made. The number of the studies on mindfulness slightly increased in the 1990s and reached for more than 100 publications until 2009. Ever since, nearly 100 works has been introduced per year, and in 2017, 692 inquiries into the subject was recorded.

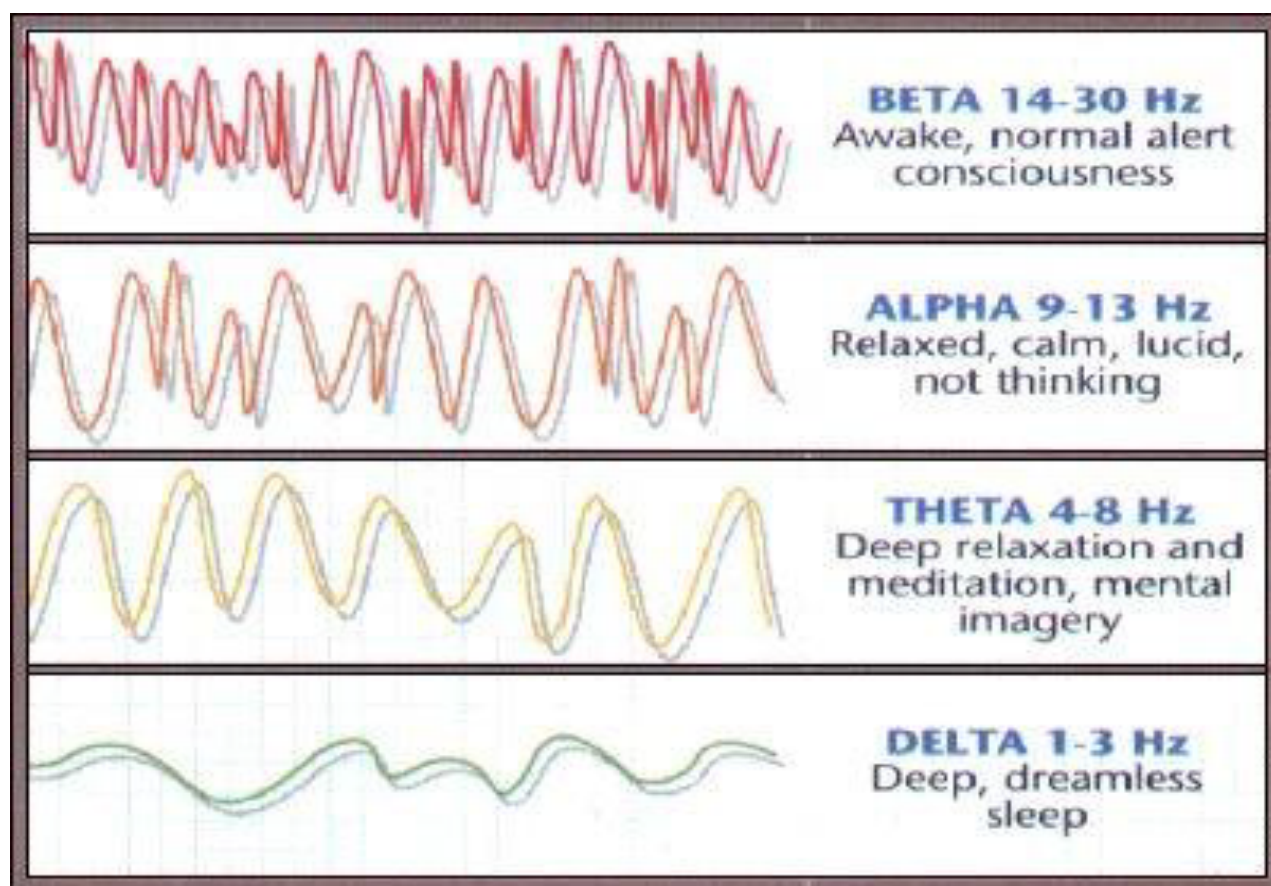


**Figure 2:** Mindfulness Journal Publications by Year, 1980-2017 (AMRA, 2018)

Since there has been a surge of enthusiasm for the conceptions of mindfulness meditation over the past few years, Krygier et al. (2013) and Raghunathan (2014) demonstrate that there are numerous physical advantages of meditation shown by an abundance of researches, such as left-to-right prefrontal activity, heart rate variability improvement, inflammation decrease and shortening of telomeres. Additionally, rewards for practicing mindfulness even surpass the tangible realms of physiology.

There are indeed plenty of publications, researches and groundworks illustrating that mindfulness meditation also promotes psychological and affective well-being with both quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Davidson et al., 2003; Arias, 2008; Mrazek et al., 2008, Foureur et al., 2013; Krygier et al., 2013). Particularly, Brown et al. (2007), through extensive research and compelling evidence, have effectively outlined four salutary effects of mindfulness, including psychological wellness, physical health, behavioral and emotional regulation as well as relationship and social interaction quality. Kuyken et al. (2008) also substantiate those claims by conducting a Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) program in 8 weeks, which is discovered to be more advantageous to decreasing long-term depression than antidepressants.

Mindfulness meditation also proves its benefits among people with educational background through the study conducted by Flaxman and Flook (2008). In this investigation, a quicker reduction in the level of stress and hormone cortisol, which signifies better stress regulation, was measured and recorded at Chinese students following a pressured experimental duty. They also reported having less depression, anxiety and anger in comparison with a group of those that exclusively undergoing relaxation training. In addition, Lazer et al. (2005) discover that mindfulness potentially has lasting effects of changing the structural and neural patterns of the brain in both mindfulness practice session and daily life activities. The study might be a key in providing the scientific foundation for mindfulness and there have been numerous researches into neurology regarding meditation ever since. For instance, brainwave patterns have been categorized into four types: Delta, Theta, Alpha and Beta (Morgan, 2015: 82). This means that a sense of calmness and relaxation is promoted through the practice of mindfulness meditation (Figure 3).



**Figure 3:** Brain Wave Patterns (Schutt, 2016)

## **2.7 Key Work-related Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation**

Despite the small scale with approximately 100 participants administered in some papers (Manocha et al., 2011, Mrazek et al., 2012, Dane & Brummel, 2013), the affirmative and positive results of mindfulness have been steady concerning different types of jobs and stress level at work. This report will further examine the three key psychological advantages of mindfulness, which are improved social relationship, retained focusing ability and enhanced productivity performance, on employees in occupational environment.

### **2.7.1 Improved Social Relationships**

While the most popular qualitative and quantitative methodology used to assess the influences of mindfulness is surveying, it is undoubtedly not the only one. Currently, some researchers have utilized fMRI technology so as to investigate the influence of meditation on sentiments, elevating the method to a higher scientific level. Respectively, by employing this technique, Modinos et al. (2010) ascertain that

meditation has a remarkable effect on participant reassessment of temperamental stimuli and reduces the level of negative emotional reactions that they are undergoing. In particular, when people have to face any criticism or feedback, there is an internal motivation urging them to immediately show their negative emotions. Meditation, however, will help lessen these temperamental impulses and guard against transitory emotional highs that might insidiously lead to hasty and reckless decision-making in trade dealings (Teper & Inzlicht, 2014). Thus, the temptation to achieve the status quo will be more easily disdained by a mindful employee with emotional control and maintained composure. Malinowski and Lim (2015) also confirm that non-reactivity and non-judgement are characteristic keys to sustaining the long-term growth and success of the company.

In the working environment, employees tend to easily become exhausted and overwhelmed when they have to deal with different kinds of people on a daily basis. Therefore, the absence of proper self-control in emotions has been proposed to be detrimental to leadership achievement and success (McCall et al., 1988). Accordingly, Arias (2008) pursues research to determine whether there is a noteworthy improvement in leadership performance of executives working for organizations after 20-week meditation training program. The positive results from the experiment reinforce the idea that meditation practice and is highly beneficial to the workplace performance and leadership success. For that reason, it is highly recommended that employees practice mindfulness meditation in favor of better regulating emotions, sympathizing with other people, keeping composure and cultivating congenial atmosphere for their colleagues as well as clients.

Moreover, optimism is also one of the decisive factors of job performance. In the author's book "Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life" with a case study on an insurance company, Seligman (2006) highlights that employees who had a higher score on optimism scale also had a better performance of sales. By practicing meditation, people can not only promote their well-being but also enhance optimism and hope, resulting in improvement in job performance and work engagement (Malinowski & Lim, 2015).

### **2.7.2 Retained Focusing Ability**

Living in the modern fast-paced progression of technology, people are regularly bombarded with shocking news, innovative inventions and overloaded information. In addition, email inboxes, text messages and notifications on social media are believed to be the main pernicious contributors to the short attention span of employees, lowering their sustained focus and work productivity. By training the mind to continuously focus only on the sensations and pushing away any ideas or thoughts that are not in tune with the present, meditators can get into the habit of “hyper-focusing” on the current needs of business while avoiding all unnecessary distractions. If employees can practice meditation every day, their ability to stay focused will be strongly strengthened, memories will be accelerated, and work performance will be greatly enhanced (Manna et al., 2010; Foureur et al., 2013). In other words, their effectiveness and efficiency will be maximized through mindfulness meditation.

Mindfulness not only helps improve the attention span but also assists in deciding which span should be focused in order to boost decision-making ability. Only when staying calm and still will the mind become lucid and provide intellectual clarity. In other words, clarity implies better judgment. For example, Seppala (2015) cites founder of Cooper Investors, Peter Cooper, when illustrating a point how his talent for investment is attributed to meditation practice:

Being an investor requires the distillation of large volumes of information into a few relevant insights. Meditation has helped me discard interesting but unnecessary information and focus on the few things that make a difference to long-run investment performance.

Multitasking can be considered to be the opposite of focused attention. It is indeed a preferable way of working with the belief that people can boost productivity and save plenty of their time by performing different types of tasks simultaneously. Although some multitasking can be beneficial to working productiveness, too much multitasking can backfire and account for low effectiveness and poor performance, especially in a dynamic, demanding and fast-moving occupational environment (Adler & Benbunan-Fich, 2011). In addition, Gupta (2016) indicates that people do not fulfill tasks at the same time; they are actually switching from one work to another. It will cost them more

time and brain bandwidth to alternate between those tasks, leading to negative influence over their work conduct and final product's quality.

Some people might argue that they have to focus 100 percent on their job that it leaves them no time to do the contemplative practice. Sparing 30 minutes a day to sit still and "do nothing" may be considered to be a waste of time at first glance, especially with the hectic schedules of the organizational leaders and executives. However, Mohandas Gandhi, one of the greatest leaders of the 20th century, once stated that "I have so much to accomplish today that I have to meditate for two hours instead of one". His saying is also similar to the online article by Seppala (2015) that "people do not do meditation, meditation do people". The more people meditate, the more focused they become and the more time they can save for other tasks and activities in life.

### **2.7.3 Enhanced Productivity Performance**

Juxtaposed with those psychological advantages is enhancement in cognitive ability gained from the contemplative practice. In fact, mindfulness meditation has significantly positive impacts on cerebral activities with wider prefrontal cortex, denser neural gray area, and decreased amygdala, which are known as being conducive to the process of learning, memory, perspective taking, emotional regulation and adaptive reactions to stress (Creswell et al., 2007; Modinos et al., 2010; Davidson et al. 2013). Those benefits can be of great contribution to the success of an organization, counting creativity, resilience, communication skills, work commitment as well as reduced absenteeism, conflict and staff turnover.

For instance, Silicon Valley business is famous for its unique work culture: entrepreneurial, international-linked, hectic, innovation-driven and fast-moving. It is easy to fall into the trap of opportunistic behaviors, immoral work ethics, unfulfilling greed and work-life imbalance (Plante, 2010). In particular, Dane and Brummel (2013) have explored there is a significantly positive correlation between mindfulness and work performance in such dynamic occupational settings. As a result, organizational leaders and executives are strongly advised to incorporate meditation training programs into their office, giving support to the camaraderie of the workforce and

holding their company from sinking into the seabed of antagonism, separation and depression.

## **2.8 Implementation of Mindfulness Training**

### **2.8.1 The Advantages**

Given the salutary effects of meditation, it can be inferred that mindfulness training is also positively correlated with the work outcomes and job engagement. The advantages of implementing mindful training can be the same as those of individual meditation practice in the section 2.7: improved social relationship, retained focusing ability, enhanced productivity performance. However, only a few empirical researches were established to prove the actual relationship between mindfulness training programs and workplace productivity. Indeed, although Dane and Brummel (2013) could provide data that support the negative relationship between mindfulness in the workplace and turnover intention, when taking the dimensions of “work engagement” into consideration, this correlation was insignificant.

Regardless of that, AMRA (2016) has stated that overall healthcare cost is projected to decrease thanks to the workplace mindfulness. The fact that healthcare costs are increasingly rising in the U.S. has concerned the employers tremendously. They then integrate mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) into the workplace in order to reduce stress and illness as well as facilitate self-care in employees. As a matter of fact, a study by Klatt et al. (2006) has shown that the participants in a MBI were notably less likely to visit their doctors and to be hospitalized. Furthermore, in a randomized controlled research by Mrazek et al. (2013), a 2-week mindfulness training course was proved to ameliorate cognitive function and working memory capacity with the increase in GRE reading-comprehension scores, and to decrease mind wandering with distracting thoughts during the experiments. The results suggest that cultivating mindfulness can be a key unlocking immutable skills such as IQ, and an effective tool for promoting cognitive performance with extensive merits.

### **2.8.2 The Disadvantages**

In spite of the aforementioned promising benefits, some researchers have shown several concerns that mindfulness meditation training programs may backfire and generate unintentional outcomes that are in non-compliance with the organizational bottom line. For example, while Seppala (2015) only outlines the benefits of implementing meditation into employee training program of the company, Brendel (2017) appears to be more objective and impartial by indicating that such program can have inherent limitations.

Specifically, workers may explicit fulfill tasks in a way that fail to conform the company's goals and ideals as mindfulness can motivate them to act in the preference for their own interests and values (Ericson et al., 2014). This will likely have a harmful effect on job productivity, especially when the nature of the work is monotonous and repetitive. In other words, the employees may approach job in a more relaxed way with the belief that they should prefer spending time with their families to overburdening themselves with their work duties. Moreover, people tend to limit their world with internal barriers and refuse to change their minds as well as characteristic behaviors. Mindfulness then might bear inherent side effects on creativity and innovation since the thinking often needs changing in order to generate "aha" moments (Giang, 2015). The phenomenon of withdrawing into a meditative mindset and using the technique as a way to stay away from difficult problems is described as the avoidance risk by Brendel (2015). Therefore, it is important for managers to fully evaluate the pros and cons of applying mindfulness training to the organization in order to better understand when and how the program can boost work performance versus when it may not.

Although mindfulness is acknowledged to be universally advantageous, the scientific study on mindfulness exercise is portrayed as having a poor methodological quality and does not seem to have a common theoretical perception (Ospina et al., 2007). Indeed, people from culturally diverse backgrounds with dissimilar physicalities and mentalities may practice and be exposed to meditation differently. The practice is not one size fits all and may in fact frustrate and cause some certain individuals trouble. Lustyk et al. (2009) provided an in-depth report of mindfulness research that announced negative side effects to practitioners. Those include insomnia, loss of appetite, increased risk of seizures, feelings of anxiety, disorganized speech,



hallucinations, psychosis and depersonalization. The authors particularly warned vulnerable patients, for example, those with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to be especially cautious when practicing meditation. In a nutshell, participants should be screened conscientiously to check their suitability for practicing mindfulness, and the teachers should be decently supervised and instructed.

Another problem of implementing mindfulness intervention to the company is that employers fall into the trap of abandoning all other coping mechanisms. It is important not to forget there also exist many other great techniques than can help staff members cope with work distress and life challenges. Mindfulness practice can not always be used to alleviate stress and act as cure-all (Lomas, 2015), According to National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NIH) (2016), meditation should not be treated as a replacement for common health care or as a reason to postpone seeing a doctor. Similarly, given the work-related benefits of meditation, some companies can become overreliant on the technique to reduce stress in employees. Indeed, there are also other ways to prevent employees from being subject to stress, such as re-organizing work and appropriate task delegation. They will be more effective in protecting the employee well-being in the first place than utilizing meditation program sessions as a quick fix later.

In addition, meditation may yield unfavorable results if people feel that they are being forced to stay mindful in the program instead of voluntarily participating (Hyland et al., 2015). Despite the fact that some people like meditating, they may prefer practicing the technique on their own or find it awkward and uncomfortable to do it with a group of people, especially professional colleagues. If not executed appropriately, the mindfulness intervention can increase the work-related stress instead of reducing it as the initial intention. Brendel (2015) illustrates this point with an example that some employees in a company gathered together after weeks of practicing mindfulness meditation in the workplace and told the group leader that they would prefer the daily exercise be voluntary and practice of their own volition.

Ethical problem is the last but not the least disadvantage that meditation implementation can bring into corporations. Purser and Loy (2013) deduced from a saying of a Zen teacher that mindfulness application might be modified into a trite and

curative method that can strengthen the unwanted consequences of meditation such as ill will, greed and delusion in the occupational environment. Carette and King (2004) also argued that mindfulness program could be utilized as a way to placate dissatisfied employees, retaining the status quo, and eventually control and maneuver the personnel.

### **2.8.3 Controversies, Questions and Challenges**

Lately, there has been a wide array of mindfulness training programs in large corporations along with smaller companies, such as the Awake Project at Intel, the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute at Google and the Institute for Mindful Leadership. From that fact, it can be easily inferred that multinational enterprises are joining this global movement for the sake of improvement in the productiveness of the workforce, one of the most valuable competitive advantages that needs securing (Hyland et al., 2015). In addition, employees can now access those meditation programs online in real time or even asynchronously, so that travel time can be effectively saved and they are also encouraged to participate directly (ibid).

Related to this is the issue that, since meditation training sessions are progressively incorporated into company workplace, there is a possibility the mindfulness programs will be sharply truncated in favor of complying with the time constraint of organizations and gaining attendance of managers and CEOs. Similarly, since the surge of interest in such practice will likely result in deficiency of experienced facilitators, qualified coaches and properly trained organizational personnel aiming to lead mindfulness training, employees may not be able to reap full benefits of meditation sessions (Chaskalson, 2011).

With regard to obtaining salutary effects of mindfulness sessions, Glomb et al. (2011) and Vogus (2011) have noted that the benefits are more remarkable in the work environments that are dynamic and require intensively emotional regulation. In fact, dynamic job is likely to be affiliated with unpredictability and time pressure, which are one of the main causes of stress and emotional arousals (Klein, 1998). Moreover, there are also existing stress management training programs, which specifically concentrate on relaxation, behavioral, cognitive techniques and have proven successful in

decreasing distress and depression at work (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). Although such relaxation programs yield similar results on reducing stress with meditation training (Jain et al., 2007), mindfulness workplace intervention has distinctive impact on reducing wandering and contemplation and therefore, boosts the quality of sleep and recuperation from work tension (Querstret & Cropley, 2012).

As stated previously, there is still little empirical evidence proving the relationship between mindfulness workplace and job performance, especially when accounting for all the dimensions of work engagement (Dane & Brummel, 2013). In fact, there are other intervening factors influencing the job performance that cannot be fully controlled, such as the health status and daily routine of employees at work. For example, assuming that people are most productive in the morning, employers should encourage staff members to spend the few initial hours of the working day concentrating on significant and cognitive tasks like strategic assignment or important meetings and conversations. Thus, to be able to reap the long-term benefits of mindfulness training, Matthews (2017) suggest the company not only offer temporary and short-term mindfulness courses, but also embed them into the one of core values of business operation.

Finally, people will tend to think of using sedatives, going on company retreats or vacations and doing yoga as alternative panaceas for stress and depression in the workplace. Indeed, when employees are first introduced to meditation, they will likely perceive the session of “sitting still” to be boring and thus, useless for stress reduction. However, the stance here is that they do not necessarily go outside to find externally stimulating factors for recreation or relaxation. While the tranquil sceneries with mountains and lakes are believed to incredibly enhance the inner peace and calmness, people can still enjoy the serenity only by sitting quietly in their own room. Moreover, employees can participate in the mindfulness training on the company campus or directly from their desk, which would save the organization a considerable amount of money instead of joining other activities.

## **2.9 Conceptual Framework**

Since the objective of the thesis is to explore the employees' perceptions of mindfulness meditation regarding their work performance, a comprehensive and personal research methodology is highly required. Thus, qualitative interviews are conducted. Nevertheless, the conceptual framework is not necessarily fixed through the whole course of the study. Respectively, Saldana et al. (2011) have highlighted the importance of taking changes in the framework into consideration when utilizing a qualitative methodology. The framework can evolve as the research prosecutes and further insights may be gained with unanticipated outcomes or unforeseen contingencies. Therefore, there is a strong need to constantly review this conceptual framework provided below in the process of the thesis.

For this paper, the key concepts and research questions that have been elaborated in the previous section are now used and connected to form the following conceptual framework. From that, a big picture of how meditation technique in general and mindfulness application in the workplace is perceived by both meditators and non-meditators is provided.

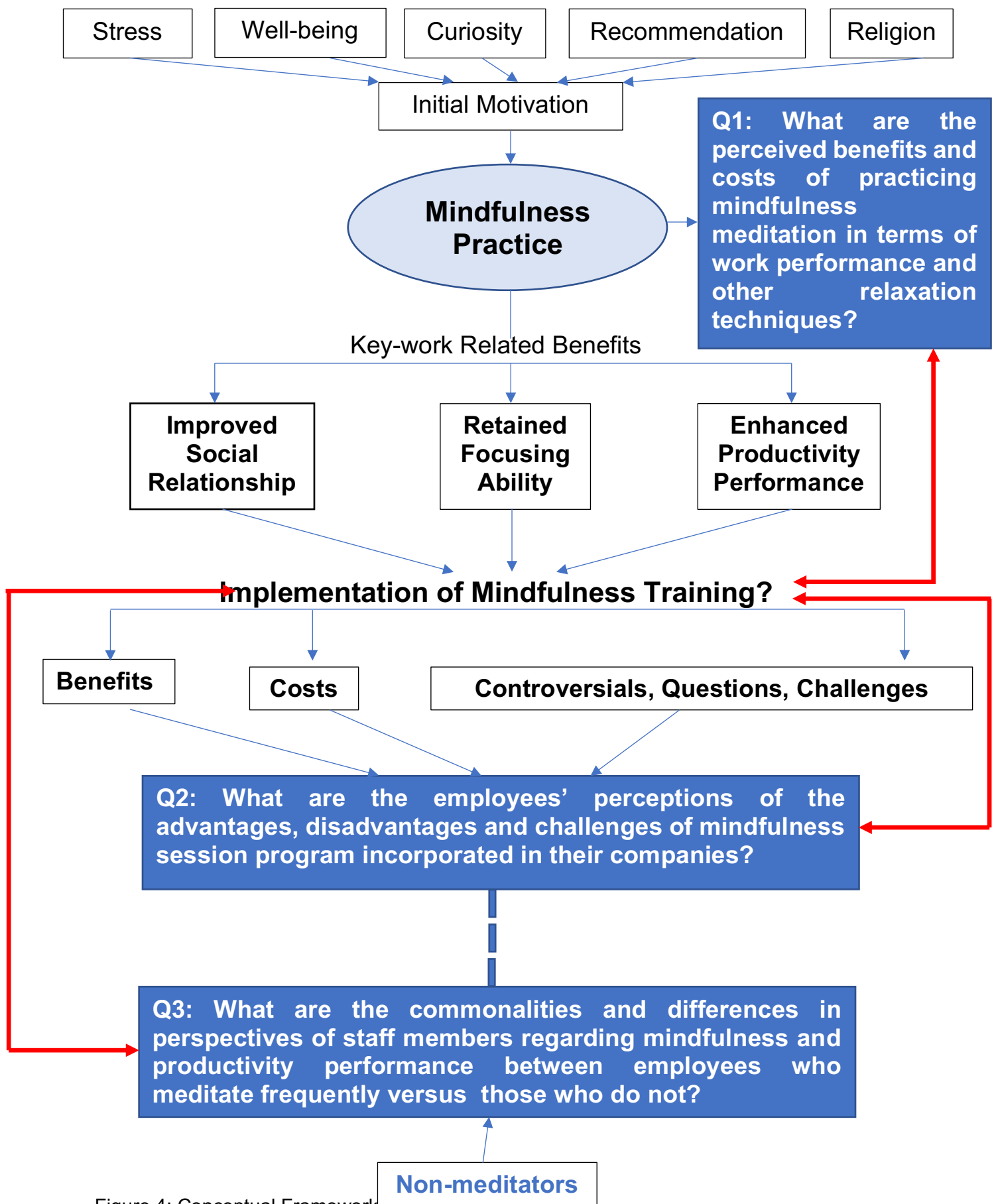


Figure 4: Conceptual Framework

## 2.10 Summary

There have been a growing number of practitioners and scholars examining how meditation, a method originated in Asia more than 2500 years ago can be beneficial to people both in their work settings and in their personal lives. Mindfulness meditation is continuously proved to improve mental and physical health, decrease stress, boost cognitive ability as well as overall well-being. With regard to the workplace mindfulness, there are three main advantages: emotional intelligence, focusing ability and productivity performance. However, meditation does not need to be perceived as separate from working life; it is indeed most effective in trait mindfulness in which the mindful state appears not only in meditation sessions but also in every aspect of life, including the workplace settings. Embracing mindfulness meditation as integral to organizational work helps employees react more positively to different situations, view the situation with better objectivity and clarity, boost productivity as well as enrich their daily lives.

Consequently, a number of corporations and firms, especially dynamic and multinational enterprises, have begun to offer mindfulness training to their staff members. However, there is still some inherent limitations preventing workers from fully benefiting from the meditation practice. There might be the case in which mindfulness training does more harm than good. How and when to apply mindfulness meditation to organization HR employee development program should be evaluated carefully, especially in a dynamic work situation with people from diverse backgrounds. Dane and Brummel (2013) have repeatedly noted in their paper that although there are ample researches into the benefits of meditation on physiological and psychological states, there are few practical inquiries examining mindfulness meditation from a workplace standpoint, especially in evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of introducing mindfulness programs to the corporations. In fact, inappropriate implementation of such training could create bad impressions on staff members and prevent them from joining more sessions in the future. Therefore, future study can further explore meditation from the viewpoint of staff members, with a possible research statement: "What are employees' perceptions of the benefits of meditation and mindfulness on their work performance"?

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

The methodology, strategies and process of data analysis employed to answer the research questions are described in this section. A summary and demographics of participants are also provided in order to depict the overall picture of the research and how it affects the final results.

#### **3.1 Choice of Approach and Method**

Since this study aims to explore the perceived benefits, costs and challenges associated with meditation practice and mindfulness intervention in the occupational settings between meditators and non-meditators, it is hard to precisely measure and quantify the perceptions. Another main goal is to compare the perspectives of mindfulness meditation between meditators and non-meditators. Those targets are less likely to attain with quantitative data or normal survey since it may limit what the participant truly want to express (Morgan, 1996). In fact, qualitative interviews permit participants to add details and expand on their answers, which can provide a more comprehensive and constructive understanding as well as exploration. The paper will then use the primary data from the qualitative paradigm to provide further insights into the research questions as stated above from different viewpoints of diverse employees.

Of all the qualitative methodologies, semi-structured interviews were professionally employed because of numerous advantages. Firstly, questions can be produced in advance, which helps the interviewer look well-prepared and proficient during the interview (Dörnyei, 2007). Secondly, questions can be open-ended and give not only the answer but also the reasons behind it, and more importantly, may not limit the richness and depth of the responses compared to the structured format (Bryman, 2008). Thirdly, semi-structured interview permits respondents to freely convey their ideas in their own languages and encourages two-way communication. Finally, more sensitive issues can be revealed and discussed in details when the individuals are interviewed and therefore, provide reliable, comparable qualitative data (Keller & Conradin).

Despite all the benefits of semi-structured interview, this qualitative data collection method requires high quality of interviewing skills and some level of training or practice to prevent interviewer suggesting answers. Interviewer has to be well-prepared and cautious of not making the questions prescriptive. In fact, the semi-structured interview is expected to have adequate number of informants so as to draw comprehensive comparisons among the data, which can become time-consuming and resource intensive for the interviewer (Keller & Conradin). Lastly, the data is collected from a very small number of people, which do not fully represent the diverse nature of employees practicing meditation in the occupational settings. Therefore, results obtained from this research should not be marked as analogous to that of a quantitative study (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

## **3.2 Participants**

### **3.2.1 Criteria for Participants**

The rationale behind this thesis is to examine if mindfulness meditation practice has influence on practitioners in both their private and working life. Therefore, the criteria for participants were:

- Men and women aged from 18 to 64 that having been practicing meditation. They are classified into meditator group for the study.
- Employees who has been working professionally in corporations or companies and are likely to be exposed to distress from the workload or other relevant factors.
- Staff members who meditate frequently in preference to real expert or sangha in meditation in order to avoid possible bias and extremity.
- At least 3 non-meditators that have the similar tasks to meditators so the comparison can be made between the 2 groups in terms of perceptions of mindfulness meditation practice and program.



### **3.2.2 Description of Interviewees**

From the suggestion of the supervisor, the number of 8 to 12 interviewees are satisfactory to make general comments about the perceptions of participants. Thus, there were total 11 participants interviewed within the course of 2 months; 8 of them were meditators and 3 of them were non-meditators . All of the interviewees met the criteria above and there were no constraints on the kinds of meditation practiced by them.

Although the diversity in backgrounds of respondents was highly encouraged by the supervisor with the sake of the objectivity of the thesis, the research still has a specific case study at KMS Technology Corporations (<https://www.kms-technology.com/>) in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam. 7 out of 11 respondents are the official and current employees at KMS. The reason to choose KMS is because it is an exemplary example of a modern technology-based company with such a fast-paced working environment. The company is a leading provider of software development, testing services, and consulting with offices based out of Georgia, California and Vietnam. It has also been awarded to be one of the 50 leading IT companies in Viet Nam in 2017 for 3 consecutive times (KMS, Blog). The nature of innovative software outsourcing industry is indeed relatively competitive, which can easily put employees in distress and work overload with a lack of proper management and appropriate wellness programs inside the company. However, KMS has received multiple recommendations on Glassdoor.com due to its emphasis on career development and success of employees unlike other large organizations. One of the Managing Directors, Mr. Nguyen Viet Hung, has offered numerous employee development programs such as yoga class, outdoor bonding activities and mindfulness meditation seminars. From that, several staff members commenced practicing mindfulness frequently under the supervision of a meditation master who was introduced to KMS in a company retreat. They were then invited to become the interviewees for this research.

Below are the participants' profiles and sociodemographic of the 11 interviewees:

Participant	Age	Gender	Nationality	Occupation	Year(s) of Meditation	Meditation Type
Participant 1	60	Female	Finnish	Community	40	Christian
Participant 2	58	Male	British	Education	15	New Kadampa Tradition
Participant 3	22	Female	Vietnamese	Business	2	Vipassana
Participant 4	36	Male	Vietnamese	Business (KMS)	1	Theravada
Participant 5	37	Female	Vietnamese	Business (KMS)	6	Others
Participant 6	31	Female	Vietnamese	Business (KMS)	4	Others
Participant 7	25	Female	Vietnamese	Business (KMS)	2	Others
Participant 8	41	Female	Vietnamese	Business (KMS)	5	Theravada
Participant 9	33	Male	Vietnamese	Business (KMS)	0	Non
Participant 10	37	Male	Vietnamese	Business (KMS)	0	Non
Participant 11	51	Female	British	Education	0	Non

Table 1: Participants' Profiles

Gender					
Category	Male			Female	
Participants	5			6	
Age					
Years	20-30	30-40	40-50	50+	
Participants	2	5	1	3	
Occupation					
Category	Business		Community	Education	
Participants	8		1	2	
Nationality					
Cateogry	British		Finnish	Vietnamese	
Participants	2		1	8	
Meditation Experience					
No. of Years	0-5	5-10	10-15	15+	Non
Participants	4	2	1	1	3

<b>Meditation Type</b>						
<i>Practice</i>	Christian	New Kadampa Tradition	Vipassana	Theravada Buddhism	Others	Non
<i>Participants</i>	1	1	1	2	3	3

Table 2: Sociodemographic Characteristics of Interviewees

### 3.3 Procedure: Recruitment and Interviewee Selection

The thesis topic is first chosen out of curiosity and the background of 2-year meditation practice of the researcher. The data was collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews, which were undertaken at a location or channel chosen by the informants (their places of work, home, the university, or via Skype). The 11 respondents were founding combining appropriateness and snowball sampling, which means the researcher contacted people in her circle of friends, university chaplain, thesis supervisor and LinkedIn profile, and asked them to refer the researcher to other prospective participants. The interviews with meditators lasted averagely 45 to 60 minutes while those with non-meditators only lasted 20-30 minutes.

The iPhone 6S was used to record the interviews digitally under the permission of interviewees. Since there were only 2 native English-speaking participants out of 11, all of the interviews were manually transcribed and translated so as to secure the degree of accuracy of the answers. Field notes were also taken in order to capture the particularly relevant and interesting points and that may not be expressed fully by the normal transcriptions, such as underlying meanings, cadence, special gestures, or even “sarcasm”. All interviews were 1:1 conversation. Only 2 out of 11 interviews were conducted via Skype due to the travel costs and also for the sake of convenience. The rest were organized directly and in person. There were some follow-up interviews conducted to fill the gaps or clarify some ambiguous meanings in the answers of few participants; these were run via Skype as well as email.

Participants' names and other details that are likely to infer to their identification is removed to protect the respondents' confidentiality and to ensure the ethics of qualitative interview methodology (Kaiser, 2009). The interviews were conducted with the purpose of eliciting narratives regarding participants' experiences of meditation. White (1987) states that narratives help people arrange events chronologically and demonstrate how they establish and denote meanings about their lives. It could then become the best way to investigate their experiences and subjective viewpoints. This approach also provides a safe space and proper opportunity for people to tell their stories in their own words, which may generate unexpected results and considerably increase the originality as well as value of the research (Minichiello et al., 1995). The interview questions were devised in consultation with the thesis supervisor and based on the literature review (see Appendix A). The first part of the interview aimed to collect the demographic data and to obtain stories and motivations leading up to commitment to mindfulness meditation. The second part concentrated on how the participants perceived the effects of meditation on their job performance. The final part explored how the employees think about the mindfulness intervention in their workplace with regard to advantages, disadvantages and challenges.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

As mentioned previously, the research of this thesis is conducted through the qualitative interviews with semi-structured and open-ended questions. This methodology was chosen as it has been considered to be the best fit for the research that aims to study a natural social phenomena and to explore specific observations (Saldana et al., 2011). Rouse (2013) also states that it is necessary to take note of common patterns and regularities that can help clarify the phenomena and grasp the quintessence of observations in the qualitative interview. Furthermore, Patel and Davidson (2003) highlight the importance of being conscious that answers to a problem will neither be explained nor provided; instead, it offers new perceptions and insights. Thus, this thesis is built upon subjective perspectives of employees to investigate the result of mindfulness meditation practice and program integrated into the companies.

During the process, neutrality, unbiased, and open-mindedness are the essential characteristics of a researcher to make generalization with appropriate evidence and to achieve the proper analysis without removing or distorting any relevant information (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Löfgren, 2013). There are two approaches to examining the content and data in qualitative study: deductive and inductive. While the inductive method is useful when there are no previous research and particular frameworks associating with the phenomenon, the deductive technique is used in the other way around, collecting data to confirm or repudiate original theories in dissimilar situations (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Since there is no particular framework for the objectives of this thesis and the raw data from the interviews in this will be analyzed and condensed into summary, succinct format, an inductive analysis method is employed. Despite the fact that there are other analytic strategies that can be seen as stronger than general inductive method in developing model or theory, evaluators still agree that inductive approach is one of the most simple and straightforward approaches to qualitative data analysis (Thomas, 2006).

The data analysis of this research is mainly inspired by Löfgren (2013) and Graneheim & Lundman (2004) with the use of the key concepts: code, categories, and themes. The content was examined as follow:

- The transcriptions are read carefully and entirely to depict an overall picture.
- Take note of something that are repeated in several places, surprising facts, said to be important by interviewees, similar/relevant to the purpose of the study or previous published reports, which (video) call as “code”. A new code can be created by combining two or more codes.
- The codes are then selected and grouped into “categories”, which do not have to be of the same type.
- The relating categories are collected together to form into a comprehensive “theme”, or major “categories”.
- Under the section Findings, connections between categories and themes are described and analyzed with neutrality and non-interpretation.
- Under the section Discussion, the results are interpreted and written out in light of similar or previous studies, theories or concepts from the topic and other

relevant aspects, in order to provide the main results as well as create new insight into the research problem.

In this thesis, the data analysis will conform to the normal process of a regular qualitative interview study. The total 11 records were first transcribed verbatim into a Word document instantly after the interviews finished. Transcripts were then sent electronically to participants who had asked to see the written version, which all granted. From the transcription of the whole interviews, the principle subjects were classified in an Excel file based on the research questions and connected back to existing literature review to elucidate the emerging analysis (Cutcliffe, 2015). Specific findings will be demonstrated in the Chapter 4. Moreover, the use of contrast matrix by Miles and Huberman (1994) is employed with the purpose of exploring the commonalities and differences in viewpoints of meditators and non-meditators on mindfulness technique in general and its application to the organization in particular. Through such data display, a table of direct quotes is made and then the matrix is evaluated by scoring similarities and differences between respondents as well as detecting factors of interrelationships to finally draw out conclusion (ibid).

### **3.5 Reliability & Validity**

Halpin (2017) describes “reliability” as the usability and accuracy of measurement tool and is mostly referred to quantitative studies. However, it can also be conceptualized as trustworthiness, neutrality, confirmability in qualitative paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A high reliability means that there should be the same results when the tests and measures are repeatable with low level of inaccuracies or random errors (Halpin, 2017). In terms of replicability, choice and process of methodology have been strived to be described as clearly and comprehensively as possible in the above sections, such as rationale behind the methodological selection, meticulous translation and manual transcribing. Therefore, this research should be reproduced with ease.

However, the risk of having “unsafe” data as well as personal bias and assumption is highly taken into consideration, which means the results would not be holistically applicable. Indeed, it just offers deeper understanding and exploration into some facets of the research problem, and the selected method is in conjunction with that purpose of the thesis based on the trustworthy criterion for qualitative paradigm (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

## 4 FINDINGS

This section illustrates the notable findings derived from the interviews, which produced 111 pages of transcript on Microsoft Word. It first presents the data of specific meditative technique practiced by the meditators and their initial motivation that brought them to the meditation. Then, the raw data will be abbreviatedly demonstrated into tables and matrix that serve to clarify the beginning research problems and objectives.

### 4.1 Meditation Practice

#### 4.1.1 Kind of Meditation

As stated in the Table 1 – Sociodemographic Characteristics of Interviewees above, there are 5 main kinds of meditation practiced by the employees: Christian, New Kadampa Tradition (NKT), Vipassana, Theravada Buddhism, Others.

Meditation Type						
<i>Practice</i>	Christian	New Kadampa Tradition	Vipassana	Theravada Buddhism	Others	Non
<i>Participants</i>	1	1	1	2	3	3

The “Others” type is practiced by 3 female employees in KMS. In their answers for the question what kind of meditation technique they are practicing, they all include the key word: “*relaxation*”. The meditative technique is about “*relaxation, set loose, observing the breath*” for Participant 5, “*relaxation [technique] first and then Vipassana*” for

Participant 6, and *“relaxation, set loose and focus on what I am doing”* for Participant 7. This commonality can be explained by the fact that there was a meditation master once coming to the KMS and taught employees about his meditation technique following the request of the CEO. He then taught them to meditate by relaxing the body, setting loose, keeping track of the breath and being mindful of every activity in which they are involving, but he did not state the specific name for his meditative method. This detail is disclosed in the casual talking with the researcher after the interview finishes, therefore is not noted on the transcript.

Additionally, the incident of having a mindfulness seminar with the meditation sangha created one more commonality in the practice of employees at KMS. They all perceive “seated meditation” and “mindful moments” in daily activities as the “two pillars” of meditation. To them, meditation is *“everywhere, everytime”* (Participant 7), *“mindfulness in every second”* (Participant 5), *“living slowly to enjoy the nature and the surroundings”* (Participant 6) and further includes *“walking, standing, lying, sitting in every gesture, in every work I do ... When I walk, I know I’m walking. When I wash dishes, I know I’m washing dishes. Simply like that”* (Participant 4).

Similar to Participant 6 who practices *“relaxation [technique] first and then Vipassana”*, there are other people taking up 2 kinds of meditation together with the emphasis on the later one: Participant 3 with Anapana and Vipassana (*“Although I mainly practice Vipassana, I usually have a quick Anapana session, which is only about focusing on breath, in my small breaks at work”*) and Participant 4 with Vipassana as well as Theravada (*“I’m [both] practicing Vipassana ... [and] following Theravada”*). However, according to Participant 8, Vipassana is in fact “the so-called Theravada meditation in Buddhism”. Finally, Participant 1 is the only one whose practice has rooted in Christian (her technique includes *“just some praying and reading Bible and some singing in some places, but most of the time it’s just silence and meditating”*) while the other meditation types are all associated with Buddhism.

#### **4.1.2 Initial motivation**

The initial motivation that brought them to meditation varies among people. Most interviewees (37.5%) came to meditation when they were all “**stressed**”. For instance,



Participant 2 were “*feeling very stressed ... and not satisfied with life*”; Participant 5 were “*stressed and depressed with family*”, and Participant 3 was “*feeling stressful at work*” before they started to practice mindfulness meditation. The other 3 motivations are curiosity (25%) and recommendation from the colleagues (25%) and also from reading books (12.5%).

## 4.2 The Perceived Benefits and Costs of Practicing Mindfulness Meditation

### 4.2.1 With Regard to Job Performance

There is a variety of advantages as well as disadvantages regarding meditation technique. The table below represents the benefits and costs of practicing mindfulness meditation in terms of job performance with multiple ticks used to show where a particular benefit or cost was emphasized by a participant.

Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness Meditation								
Participant/Benefits	1	2	3	4 (KMS)	5 (KMS)	6 (KMS)	7 (KMS)	8 (KMS)
Improved Social Relationship	✓		✓	✓				✓
Retained Focusing Ability	✓	✓✓✓		✓		✓✓	✓	✓
Enhanced Productivity Performance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓		✓✓
Increased Self-awareness			✓	✓✓✓			✓	✓
Better Intuition				✓✓	✓			✓✓
Better Decision Making				✓	✓		✓	✓
Communication			✓	✓				✓
Innovation/ Creativity	✓		✓	✓				✓✓

Leadership								✓✓
Better Emotional Regulation (ER)			✓✓✓	✓	✓		✓✓	✓✓✓
<b>Costs of Practicing Mindfulness Meditation</b>								
Time-consuming		✓	✓					
Limited Space		✓						
Not a Cure-all	✓							
Creating More Work							✓	
Shrinking Circle of Friends							✓	
Non				✓	✓	✓		✓

Table 3: The Perceived Benefits and Costs of Practicing Mindfulness Meditation

It is worthy to note that nearly all interviewees agreed that mindfulness meditation has positive influences on their **work productivity**. Although Participant 7 did not mention about the relationship between her job performance and meditation, her answers throughout the interview implies the same benefit on work productivity: *“Thanks to meditation, I become calmer and relaxed when working with my new boss, who is more severe and challenging than the old one”, “I think more positive, have less concerns and improve my ability to evaluate things”*. The 3 key-work related benefits of meditation based on the literature review (improved social relationship, retained focusing ability, enhanced productivity performance) were listed by the interviewer before the participants can tell about their own advantages gained from the practice. Participant 4 specifically confirmed those 3 by saying *“I think all the advantages you mentioned were correct, but they all come from the increased sensitivity and self-awareness and intuition. Enhanced self-awareness can be seen as the biggest benefit of meditation for me.”*

Regarding the costs or disadvantages of doing meditation, exactly half of the respondents said they had not seen anything wrong or harmful to them with the mindfulness technique. However, they did acknowledge particular disadvantages that

might be perceived by others, such as losing out to people (Participant 6: *“My friends say that my rights and benefits can be easily infringed by other people, but that’s what they think, I don’t care about that at all”*), time-consuming (Participant 4: *“It [meditation] only takes my time, but I rather see it as an investment that I have to make ... I think that is a very profitable investment”*) or awkward among the crowd (Participant 8: *“...suddenly you become very awkward, very different from other people ... We see things differently and we think differently as well. We don’t call it the downside, but then that’s the difference. That may give you a lot of challenge[s] when you don’t agree with the crowd*).*”*

#### 4.2.2 In Comparison to Other Forms of Relaxation

The participants are asked to list other relaxation techniques that they use and compare them with the mindfulness meditation practice. The results are displayed in the table below with raw data excerpts in order to better clarify the distinction:

Participants	Other Relaxation Techniques	In Comparison to Meditation
1	-walking into the forest, going to summer cottage -reading, listening to music -fixing some old furniture	<i>I’m not very good at it [fixing some one furniture], but I’m in the group so that people can help me. That’s something I like to do with my hands and I can see that my work is so different, so concrete, whereas meditation experience is more abstract and hard to define.</i>
2	-running	<i>I’m both a runner and a meditator that I actually [know] meditation is much harder than the running. To actually become physically active as a runner, involves a lot of discipline and dedication. To become a regular meditator requires even more discipline, dedication than running ... But I feel that mindfulness meditation would be</i>

		<i>generally more useful in the longer time in really helping people to live more balanced life where things are seen in perspectives.</i>
<b>3</b>	-journaling	<i>The advantages of journaling are to reduce the burden in your mind, have a clearer picture of what is happening, arrange the work properly ... While meditation is about totally focusing on the present, journal provides me the opportunity to review and draw lessons from the past. The two techniques complement each other. If you can practice both, you can gain a lot of benefits from it.</i>
<b>4 (KMS)</b>	-watch football and tennis -play badminton -listen to music	<i>In my opinion, although meditation and those relaxation techniques are different in form, their ultimate purpose is the same in helping people to relax.</i>
<b>5 (KMS)</b>	-outdoor activities -hanging out with friends -shopping, watching movies, listening to music	<i>I think all [other] relaxation techniques can help reduce my stress, but in the long term, they can't be as beneficial and profound as meditation.</i>
<b>6 (KMS)</b>	-yoga	<i>Yoga is more approachable and easier to relax than meditation, especially when I'm feeling stressed. When there are much stress, following the yoga teacher will be easier than trying to sit still and stay focused during the meditation session.</i>
<b>7 (KMS)</b>	-running -playing musical instrument	<i>Meditation is actually easier than other relaxation techniques. While you need specific tool for other methods, say, running shoes and wide space for running,</i>

		<i>instruments for playing music, you can do meditation everywhere in anytime.</i>
<b>8 (KMS)</b>	-yoga -swimming	<i>It's different because meditation is about working on your mind, while the other things are the combination of physical health and mental health, so it cannot be compared. It's just different.</i>

Table 4: Meditation in Comparison to Other Relaxation Techniques

From the Table 3, it is truly interesting to see that nearly each individual has different opinion of meditation in compared to other relaxation techniques. While Participant 6 says yoga is more approachable and easier to relax than meditation, Participant 7 holds the opposite viewpoint by stating meditation is actually easier than other recreational activities. Both Participant 5 and 2 agree that meditation will be more beneficial than other hobbies when put in the long term. Moreover, Participant 4 perceives all of the techniques, including meditation, as the same outlet for peace and repose, whereas Participant 8 asserts they are different in the form of practicing and Participant 3 says her interest in journalling and meditation complement each other well. Lastly, Participant 1 has a distinct way of comparison with her leisure in fixing old furniture: *“meditation experience [to me] is more abstract and hard to define”*.

### 4.3 Perceptions of Employees on Mindfulness Intervention in the Workplace

#### 4.3.1 Current Situation

Before exploring the employees' opinions of advantages, disadvantages and challenges of a particular mindfulness intervention in the occupational settings, the current situation is investigated to draw a general picture of how meditation program is being regarded by the staff members. The results are illustrated in the table below with a tick ✓ for “yes”, a cross X for “no”, and a dark circle ● for “it depends”, “neutrality” or “don't know”:

Participant	Do your current company have any official program promoting meditation for sake of employee development and productivity?	If no, would you like to have one?	What do you think is a proper time for one mindfulness session in a company?	What is your ideal mindfulness meditation program in the workplace?
1	X	✓	15 minutes	<i>I work for a church, so it's easy to say that I need time for praying, that's very acceptable ... And also I think it could have been possible to have in my office, for example I leave it open door and you can come and you open some meditative music.</i>
2	X	✓	10 minutes	<i>I think an ideal program would be one in which people were initially taught techniques for meditation and mindfulness. And then if the university may [create] space available such as quiet rooms where people could go to meditate away from the normal activities of the university. Our campuses are very geographically spread out; it's quite big university. From one</i>

				<i>side of the campus to the other is about a kilometer or more. So there would need to be set up of a quite room for meditation that people could use.</i>
3	X	✓	15 minutes	<i>The company must create and space and environment for employees to meditate. The meditation teacher must be knowledgeable and experienced in teaching mindfulness as well ... The company should also create opportunity for employees to arrange their time for meditation sessions.</i>
4 (KMS)	X	●	10-30 minutes	<i>The program first needs support from top executives to provide physical and “relaxational” space in the company. They must truly understand the values behind this intervention.</i>
5 (KMS)	X	●	15 minutes	<i>I see meditation program in the company just as an opportunity through which people can lead a healthier lifestyle ... It just plays as an introduction to meditation. The employees themselves must take commitment and practice on their own in the long run so that they can become better minidful of every moment in anywhere anytime.</i>

6 (KMS)	X	●	30 minutes	<i>My ideal meditation program would be the one that is close to the nature. I believe by getting close to the nature, we can realize numerous interesting things.</i>
7 (KMS)	X	X	Depends on the particular technique	<i>Having no meditation program is actually an ideal program for me.</i>
8 (KMS)	X	X	15-30 minutes	<i>...we're figuring out that what is the lighter version that we can offer to the public ... They can call it mindfulness, they can call it whatever, but then they need to be doing it the right way. Otherwise, it would be harmful ... If they can understand the core principles of health and wellness, then they can organize and promote activities around that [physical health and mental health], and that's the right combination according to their culture, according to their contexts. If they start to apply just meditation, I don't think it will work that way.</i>

Table 5: Current Situation of Mindfulness Intervention in the Workplace

There has been no official mindfulness meditation program in each meditator's occupational setting. While other participants all want to have one in their workplace, KMS's staff members seem to have a more detached view. Take Participant 4 for example, his answer to the question whether he wants a meditation program in KMS is: *"I don't know whether I want to have a meditation program in KMS; it's just I have no intention of executing it right now ... The reason is I want to explore myself first*



*before teaching others, and I think that is probably the hardest part, so I only need to focus on myself first*". Therefore, it took him such a while to imagine an ideal mindfulness intervention in the workplace. This "whatever" and neutral attitude is also reflected in other employees at KMS. The can be due to the fact that: *"It didn't work actually. Actually, meditation is not an easy one for everyone. When I first see all the benefits from meditation, I use my own money to organize seminars for KMSers. There are around more than 200 people to join the seminars. But I figure it out that after 1-2 years, only less than 10 people can really pursue that journey. So that's the person I learned from the process: it's not suitable for everyone. I don't think that we should do a formal program because meditation, for me now, it needs to be attached to the religion as well, to Buddhism. And then as you know, the religions and politics are always the topics that people would not want to talk about, because it can cause a lot of debates"* (Participant 8). Participant 7 even says that *"having no meditation program is actually an ideal program for me"*.

Nearly all of the meditating interviewees suggest at most 30 minutes for 1 mindfulness meditation session. Only Participant 7 says that the appropriate time should depend on the particular kind of meditation: *"if it [meditation practice] is just about observation and relaxing, then it can be any moment and shouldn't be limited by time"*. The image of an ideal mindfulness program also varies among the respondents. Having a spacious area to meditate is the top priority for most interviewees (Participant 2, 3, 4, 6). Especially, the meditation space should be close to the nature in Participant 6's opinion. While Participant 2 and 3 place emphasis on having a knowledgeable mindfulness teacher to teach the technique properly, Participant 1 highlights the importance of having time for praying during the session since she is working for the church. Both Participant 5 and 8 say that although it will be useful if the meditation program is implemented, it is largely up to the employees to get involved and commit to the practice seriously. Moreover, Participant 3 recommends that the company should create opportunity for employees to arrange their time, whereas Participant 4 suggests the executives have to understand the true values behind the intervention, and thus, support the practice. Finally, Participant 8 is trying to find a *"lighter version"* of meditation to introduce to employees at KMS because he realizes the program may not be suitable for everyone.

### 4.3.2 Advantages, Disadvantages & Challenges

One of the key objectives of this thesis is to discover the perspectives of staff members on advantages, disadvantages and challenges when implementing the mindfulness meditation intervention in the workplace. In the table below, the main ideas are demonstrated in bold with raw data excerpts in italics to better clarify the distinction.

	Advantages	Disadvantages	Challenges
1	<b>Power of Group</b> <i>(It's important to meditate by yourself, but sometimes it is important to be together)</i>	<b>Cause a Lack of Human Resources for Work</b> <i>(If you're working in the factory where you have many machines, you have to look all the time. You can't go away, if you go [meditating], who's going to take care of the machines?)</i>	<b>Employers' Support and Understanding</b> <i>(it has to have the employers who really understand the meaning [of meditation]. If they don't see the meaning, it's not going to work)</i> <b>Employees' Willingness to Join</b> <i>(If people say they don't want to practice so you can't use and it's not going to work. They have to be motivated for that)</i>
2	<b>Focusing</b> <i>(...people being less involved in organisation politics, less involved in activities that reduce their productivity such as worrying and being concerned about things that are not really important)</i>	<b>Time-consuming</b> <i>(The possible disadvantages are finding the time in their busy days)</i>	<b>Commitment</b> <i>(To become a regular meditator requires even more discipline, dedication than running)</i> <b>Availability of Meditative Teachers</b> <i>(And I think that there would be difficulties in the workplace unless</i>

	<b>Creativity</b> <i>(They are likely to be more inspired and to have fresh ideas.)</i>		<i>there were meditation teachers readily available to staff and help them to keep them on track)</i>
3	<b>Emotional Regulation (ER)</b> <i>(It keeps employees calm to consider and solve the problems without emotional interventions)</i> <b>Focusing</b> <i>(...helps people focus on the work without getting distraction)</i> <b>Work Ethics &amp; Integrity</b> <i>(...people will overlook personal benefits. They will not do things that go against their ethical values and not backstab the others)</i> <b>Social Relationship</b> <i>(Employees will live harmoniously among the workforce ... help each other with their work ... maintain the gratitude in life and bring joy to other people life)</i> <b>Work Productivity</b>	<b>Time-consuming</b> <i>(...it's hard for employees to find time to meditate)</i> <b>Boredom</b> <i>(...staff don't want to sit in silence since they may see it as no fun)</i>	<b>Employees' Willingness to Join</b> <i>(It's hard to convince people to join meditation)</i> <b>Difficulty in Organizing</b> <i>(...hard to organize such sessions in the company)</i> <b>Vague Benefits</b> <i>(The benefits don't instantly happen. It takes time to realize the differences between before and after)</i> <b>Employees' Impatience</b> <i>(It takes time to realize the differences between before and after [meditating], staff won't have enough patience)</i>

	<i>(Given those previous benefits, [meditation] can increase work productively and help people work smarter)</i>		
<b>4 (KMS)</b>	<b>Self-awareness</b> <i>(it's like my personal benefits gained from meditating, [the practice] will also increase the self-awareness of employees)</i>	<b>Time-consuming</b> <i>(some may see it as time-consuming, but to me it's a must-have investment)</i>	<b>External Seduction</b> <i>(there are too many seductions and temptations out there such as drinking, events to join)</i>  <b>Commitment</b> <i>([it's] hard for people to take commitment [to meditation] and maintain the operation of the program)</i>
<b>5 (KMS)</b>	<b>Increased Intuition</b> <b>Mindset Change</b> <b>Reduced Stress</b> <b>Decreased Anger</b> <b>Think Positive</b> <i>(It varies from individual. To me, [meditation helps] increase intuition, change my mind, reduce stress, decrease anger, think positive, ... become healthier for some people)</i>	<b>Preconception</b> <i>(The disadvantages are not the same to each individual. If they have preconception, it's also the disadvantage [of meditation])</i>	<b>Preconception</b> <i>(It's the thinking and preconception that holds people back from participating in the first place. Other challenges depend on each staff member)</i>

<p><b>6</b> <b>(KMS)</b></p>	<p><b>Self-awareness</b> <i>(Meditation helps us realize what we have been forgetting or taking for granted in daily life)</i></p>	<p><b>Uneasiness in</b> <b>“Transition Phase”</b> <i>(When you change your mindset from going to work for benefits and promotion to internal happiness of working, there will be a transition phase ... There will be a short period when you have no idea of the meaning of going to work and lack motivation ... It's like a dilemma and a little bit uncomfortable”</i></p>	<p><b>Location</b> <b>Expense</b> <b>Time Arrangement</b> <i>(To me the challenges include finding a suitable location, having enough expense to operate and ... arranging time for work, family as well as colleagues)</i></p>
<p><b>7</b> <b>(KMS)</b></p>	<p><b>Enhanced Meditation Popularity</b> <i>(More people will get a chance to know about meditation)</i></p> <p><b>More Channel for Improving Well-being</b> <i>(there will be one more channel for staff member to explore and improve their wellness)</i></p>	<p><b>Pressure</b> <i>(People may feel pressured and compulsory to join the program)</i></p> <p><b>Not a Cure-all</b> <i>(Meditation is not one size fits all and can't solve every problem of the company)</i></p>	<p><b>Preconception</b> <i>(Not everyone likes meditation since they may relate it to a religion when they first hear about [meditation])</i></p>
<p><b>8</b> <b>(KMS)</b></p>	<p><b>Non</b></p>	<p><b>Non</b> <i>(As I told you, it's very early in time [of</i></p>	<p><b>Suitability</b> <i>(It's not suitable for everyone ... it needs to</i></p>

	<i>(It's very early in time [of preparation] so I don't really know)</i>	<i>preparation] so I don't really know)</i>	<i>be attached to the religion as well...)</i> <b>Risk of Incorrect Application</b> <i>(they need to be doing it the right way. Otherwise, it would be harmful ... it needs to be cautious about how to do that ... they [other corporates] don't have the mature framework to do meditation that way)</i> <b>Lack of Evidence</b> <i>(if you want to convince others, then you need to have the proof)</i> <b>Lack of Resources</b> <i>(It may come the point that we don't have enough people to work on that [meditation program])</i>
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Table 6: Employees' Perceptions on Advantages, Disadvantages and Challenges of Mindfulness Meditation Program

Although there has not been any official mindfulness meditation program in the interviewees' workplace, they can still depict different advantages, disadvantages and challenges associated with having the intervention at work. Participant 8 is the only one who did not give any idea about the benefits and costs of such program since he said he was just in the early stage of preparing the "lighter version" of meditation practice. Therefore, he does not truly know what the employees might get from the program. Nevertheless, he did mention numerous advantages that meditation brings

to him as shown in Table 3, ranging from retained focusing, better emotional regulation, leadership, innovation, self-awareness and enhanced productivity.

- Advantages

Most of the potential advantages of meditation program described by interviewees are similar to their own personal practice. For instance, Participant 2 believes that meditation in the workplace will not only help him but also his colleagues to be more focused and *“less involved in organisation politics, less involved in activities that reduce their productivity such as worrying and being concerned about things that are not really important”*. Participant 4 also shares the same idea by saying that the possible benefits of meditation program at work will be *“like my personal benefits gained from meditating, [the practice] will also increase the self-awareness of employees”*. Participant 3 mentions again all of the benefits she gets from practicing meditation when being asked about the advantages of implementing mindfulness to the occupational settings, such as focusing ability, emotional regulation, social relationship, work ethics and productivity. Likewise, Participant 5 thinks that meditation will help increase the intuitions of employees like the way it has helped her.

Furthermore, Participant 1 adds the boon of having the power of group to meditate in group at work (*“It’s important to meditate by yourself, but sometimes it is important to be together”*). While Participant 2 did not mention the creativity merit that meditation brings to him, he believes that the employees *“are likely to be more inspired and have fresh ideas”* with the program. Having attained better intuition and emotional regulation, Participant 5 expects that mindfulness session in the company will also change the mindset of staff members, helping them to think positively, reduce stress and anger effectively. The popularity of meditation will be enhanced and there will be more channel for workers to improve their well-being through the integration mindfulness training to Participant 7’s way of thinking.

- Disadvantages

The most common disadvantage of having a mindfulness program in the company described by the respondents is being time-consuming. According to Participant 2,3 and 4, people might have difficulty in finding the time to meditate with their already busy schedules. Meditation, if not arranged properly, can cause a lack of human

resource for work. For example, *“if you’re working in the factory where you have many machines, you have to look [after them] all the time. You can’t go away, if you go [meditating], who’s going to take care of the machines?”* (Participant 1). Moreover, based on Participant 6’s experience, people who just start meditating may get uneasy when coming through a *“transition phase” – “a short period when you have no idea of the meaning of going to work and lack motivation ... It’s like a dilemma and a little bit uncomfortable”*. If meditation is applied to the occupational settings, *“people may feel pressured and compulsory to join in the program”* (Participant 7). The last disadvantage of bringing mindfulness meditation into the working place is that it is not a cure-all (Participant 7: *“meditation is not one size fits all and cannot solve every problem of the company”*).

- Challenges

The biggest challenge of such intervention is how to persuade and motivate people to participate as well as to change their preconception about the practice. The preconception is the main factor that refrains people from joining in the first place (Participant 7: *“not everyone likes meditation since they may relate it to a religion when first hear about”*). It can also be due to the fact the employees might perceive meditation as boring (Participant 3: *“staff don’t want to sit in silence since they may see it as no fun”*), having vague benefits (Participant 3: *“The benefits don’t instantly happen. It takes time to realize the differences between before and after [meditating], staff won’t have enough patience”*), not fun as other activities (Participant 4: *“there are too many seductions and temptations out there such as drinking, events to join”*). Participant 8 also confirms that *“meditation is not suitable for everyone”* and it will be hard to convince other people if there is not enough proof or evidence. Indeed, meditation does take a huge amount of discipline (Participant 2: *“to become a regular meditator requires even more discipline, dedication than running”*) and commitment (Participant 4: *“[it’s] hard for people to take commitment [to meditation] and maintain the operation of the program”*).

As a further matter, the risk of incorrect application (Participant 8: *“they need to be doing it the right way. Otherwise, it would be harmful”*) and difficulty in organizing (Participant 3: *“hard to organize such sessions in the company”*) are significant. The program cannot operate successfully if there is lack of resources (Participant 8: *“It may*



come the point that we don't have enough people to work on that [meditation program]), meditative teachers (Participant 2: *"there would be difficulties in the workplace unless there were meditative teachers readily available to staff to help them and keep them on track"*) and formal "mature framework" (Participant 8). Other challenges were *"finding a suitable location, having enough expense to operate and ... arranging time for work, family as well as colleagues"* (Participant 6). Finally, Participant 1 underlines the importance of having employers' support and understanding: *"it has to have the employers who really understand the meaning [of meditation]. If they don't see the meaning, it's not going to work"*.

### 4.3.3 In Terms of Literature Review

The interviewees were then asked to give their opinions on provided disadvantages and challenges of workplace mindfulness program in the literature review of the thesis.

The results are illustrated in the following table with a tick ✓ for "I agree", a cross ✗ for "I disagree", a dark circle ● for "it depends", "neutrality" or "don't know" and excerpts from the interviews in italics:





DISADVANTAGES			
Participant	<i>Since meditation generally helps employees to calm down, they may approach work in a more relaxing way and may think that they should not overburden themselves with work duties. Instead, they will tend to work less, spend more time with</i>	<i>Although mindfulness is acknowledged to be universally advantageous, people from culturally diverse backgrounds with dissimilar physicalities and mentalities may practice and be exposed to</i>	<i>Given the work-related benefits of meditation, some companies can become overreliant on the technique to reduce stress in employees. Indeed, there are also other ways to prevent employees from being subject to stress, such as re-</i>

	<i>their families and have a longer rest. What is your opinion of this statement?</i>	<i>meditation differently. Do you think your personal background, such as education, religion and family have any significant effects on your meditation technique and the way you reap benefits from it? Please explain your answer.</i>	<i>organizing work and appropriate task delegation. They will be more effective in protecting the employee well-being in the first place than utilizing meditation program sessions as a quick fix later. What is your opinion of this statement?</i>
1	<p>●</p> <p><i>I think meditation will put you in [work-life] balance. So, you have work, you have the family, and it's the balance.</i></p> <p><i>If you think "my work is not important so I just meditate [and relax] ... it's not ethical then. If you have good ethics in your work, you don't steal time from your employer. Meditation is not [about] stealing time.</i></p>	<p>✗</p> <p><i>If you are stressed you can meditate to stop [the stress]. And I think it's good for [everyone] no matter what culture you come from.</i></p>	<p>✓</p> <p><i>To prevent is better. Because it's the best for everyone, better doing before. For example, it can be also sometimes too late. You can become so stressed that you can't work anymore. You have to go to the doctor.</i></p>
2	✓	✓	✓

	<p><i>I think it's true. But I don't think that productivity would decline. I think the productivity would increase. There is incomplete perception that people are productive if they are at work and if they are seen to be working working working, whereas from my experience of moving among people who meditate, some of the most productive people I know are the people who are very disciplined and very dedicated in their meditation and they have a very good balance in their life</i></p>	<p><i>certain people are more likely to be receptive to meditation than others because of their cultures and religious backgrounds.</i></p>	<p><i>A lot of stress is caused by poor management, poor organization work. And there is a danger that in promoting meditation mindfulness program. An organization could just simply be trying to cover up really poor working practices.</i></p>
3	<p>●</p> <p><i>I think the statement has 2 sides ... meditation helps you focus more on the work, then you work smarter and have more time for your family ... balance work and family ... you</i></p>	<p>X</p> <p><i>Vipassana is for everyone regardless of their backgrounds</i></p>	<p>●</p> <p><i>Stress can be caused by numerous and any reasons, not only from work ... it can be due to love life or family ... There will be always urgent tasks and unexpected ups and</i></p>

	are fully present in every moment		downs ... stress always happens. Meditation is not a quick fix, but it will certainly help in the long term.
4 (KMS)	●  It depends on how to approach and practice meditation. If you approach it negatively and wrongly, it surely won't work. Work less doesn't mean less productivity. It's about work-life balance, working smarter and creatively.	✓  The meditation technique depends on people's characteristics and health status ... Personal background and religion does have influence [on meditation].	✓  There's no one size fits all ... The companies have to implement many strategies to solve the problem.
5 (KMS)	✗  I totally disagree. Meditation does help people become calmer. But it's about how they arrange their time and has nothing to do with meditation here.	✗  Meditators just need open-mindedness and pure soul ... those personal backgrounds are not important and relevant.	✓  I agree. It's better to help employees avoid pressure from work. Meditation works way more than just reducing stress.
6 (KMS)	●  It can be true for the first period ... in the "transitional phase". But the more people meditate, the more	✓  Yes, background does influence the technique choice. For example, a Buddhist	✓  I agree. It's always better to prevent the root causes from happening in the first place. But in reality this

	<i>higher their motivation will become. Thus, they can work less with more focus and increase the productivity.</i>	<i>will rarely approach to Hinduism...</i>	<i>is hardly the case ... There is always something unexpected and not in plan but we have to find solution and balance...</i>
<b>7 (KMS)</b>	● <i>It depends on the company's mission. If the mission is to develop the well-being of employees, then the company is successful.</i>	✓ <i>Yes, the background does have profound influence on meditation technique choice.</i>	✓ <i>I totally agree. Meditation should be treated as the essentials like food water air rather than as medication.</i>
<b>8 (KMS)</b>	X <i>I don't agree with that. That's something wrong about meditation. Meditation can help you to work more effectively. Instead of spending 8 hours working, you can still finish the same amount of work in 1 hour. And now suddenly you have 7 hours more. And then it's your choice, you can use 7 hours then for work or for your family or for whatever the purpose of your life. You still have to commit that you finish</i>	X <i>I don't think so. So like the elder monk, the teacher of my teacher, he was born Islam family, grew up in Catholic schools, and finished a physics degree in university. And he became a very famous and Buddhism wise monk. It can be applicable to everyone, disabled people or non-disabled people. It's about the same Catholic or Christian, it's about the same. No one really</i>	✓ <i>I don't think that meditation can't really answer everything in the company, so that's not really realistic. I don't go with people overrated meditation to become the trend ... But if they can understand the core principles of health and wellness, then they can organize and promote activities around that, and that's the right combination according to their culture, according to</i>

	<i>your job, but now you have more advantages.</i>	<i>prevents you from observing yourself, and that's the universal things about meditation</i>	<i>their contexts. If they start to apply just meditation, I don't think it will work that way.</i>
<b>CHALLENGES</b>			
	<b><i>The benefits of mindfulness sessions have been noted to be more remarkable in the dynamic work environments in which employees have to intensively and constantly regulate their emotions than the repetitive job, for example, dealing with different customers, marketing, sale, etc. What do you think about this statement?</i></b>	<b><i>Although companies try to integrate meditation sessions in their companies with the hope of boosting work productivity, there are other intervening factors influencing the job performance that cannot be fully controlled, such as the health status and daily routine of employees at work. What is your opinion of this statement?</i></b>	
<b>1</b>	 <i>I can't say because I don't know enough.</i>	 <i>I think meditation can [still] help!... Meditation will tell you that it's okay to be sick. It's okay to be in a low productivity. It allows you to accept that I'm a human. I can't be effective because I'm sick and meditation will help you to accept that.</i>	
<b>2</b>	 <i>...that's true. I think that in a lot of contemporary job that people have to regulate emotional</i>	 <i>Yes, absolutely, there are a lot of factors which are beyond individuals' controls. And undoubtedly some</i>	

	<p><i>behaviors because the job demands that for example dealing with customers or dealing with students for our cases, or dealing with patients in the case of healthcare workers.</i></p>	<p><i>people are in objectively very difficult work situation properly because they have very poor management, properly because they're in a job where the nature of the work is just very difficult or unpleasant work. There are many people have very very difficult jobs either physically demanding job or emotionally demanding job, and job that demands very high level of skills. And if you fail with your skills, the consequences can be very significantly impactful for people lives</i></p>
3	<p>✓</p> <p><i>Meditation surely has a clearer benefits on the dynamic work.</i></p>	<p>●</p> <p><i>I don't know for sure since I have never been through this situation before at my workplace... ...Health status does have some influence [on productivity], but meditation can help prevent other relevant and specific ailments.</i></p>
4 (KMS)	<p>●</p> <p><i>I have no idea about that since I have no related work experience.</i></p>	<p>✓</p> <p><i>... meditation is not the only factor that boosts the work productivity.</i></p>
5 (KMS)	<p>✗</p> <p><i>The benefits of meditation have no relevance with kinds of profession at all ... It all helps improve our lives no matter what</i></p>	<p>✓</p> <p><i>I accept. Those intervening factors are surely the ones that we can't control.</i></p>
6 (KMS)	<p>✗</p>	<p>✗</p>

	<i>To me the benefits are the same, it's just that we are able to see the benefits in dynamic work clearer in compared to repetitive one. The difference lies in conspicuousness.</i>	<i>Meditation will still increase the work productivity no matter what. It's like doing daily exercise to improve health ... your physical and mental immunity will increase even if you get sick.</i>
<b>7 (KMS)</b>	● <i>It depends on the expectation of a company ... the benefits [of meditation] are actually more conspicuous, not remarkable in dynamic environment than in repetitive one.</i>	✓ <i>Meditation program is not the only contributor to the work productivity of the company.</i>
<b>8 (KMS)</b>	X <i>I don't expect meditation like that. It can be applicable for any any profession, marketing or whatever ... if you do the right thing, then suddenly you have more time and you'll have less issue. But then if you didn't do right, you want to make a quick decision but not the right decision, then you just create a lot more issues for you and that people would make mistakes every day.</i>	● <i>It doesn't mean that we can clear all the deadlines, all the pressure, no we cannot, but we have more energy to deal with that, so that will help. So that will need the total solution and combination of many activities and including the ethical conduct of the company as well.</i>

Table 7: Specific Disadvantages and Challenges of Meditation Program in the Workplace in terms of Literature Review

Similar to previous responses of the interviewees, there has been a considerable variation among the answers and views on the specific disadvantages and challenges of meditation practice with regard to the literature review in the section 2.8.2 and 2.8.3.



- Disadvantages

***“Since meditation generally helps employees to calm down, they may approach work in a more relaxing way and may think that they should not overburden themselves with work duties. Instead, they will tend to work less, spend more time with their families and have a longer rest.”***

More than half of the respondents (5 out of 8) expressed neutrality over the statement above. The statement has two sides (Participant 3) and it depends on which side is being considered. On the negative side, it is true that people might use meditation as an unethical excuse to “steal time” from employer and working less (Participant 1, 2). On the positive side, the practice can help them have more time to achieve the work-life balance. Work-life balance is widely known to be a crucial contributor to an employee’s well-being. Thus, the usefulness of the meditation practice strategy in the workplace also depends on the mission of the company, whether it is aiming to improve the well-being of the staff members or to increase the work productivity with more working hours (Participant 7: “*If the mission is to develop the well-being of employees, then the company is successful*”). Despite so, the majority of interviewees mention that having a proper work-life balance and working for fewer hours do not necessarily mean less productivity; it is in fact the matter of working smarter and more effectively by being fully present in every moment (Participant 2, 3, 4, 6, 8). Specifically, Participant 2 illustrates this statement from his own experience:

*There is incomplete perception that people are productive if they are at work and if they are seen to be working working working working, whereas from my experience of moving among people who meditate, some of the most productive people I know are the people who are very disciplined and very dedicated in their meditation and they have a very good balance in their life”.*

Participant 5 also expresses strong disagreement with the statement: “*I totally disagree. Meditation does help people become calmer. But it’s about how they arrange their time and has nothing to do with meditation here*”.

***“Although mindfulness is acknowledged to be universally advantageous, people from culturally diverse backgrounds with dissimilar physicalities and mentalities***

***may practice and be exposed to meditation differently. Do you think your personal background, such as education, religion and family have any significant effects on your meditation technique and the way you reap benefits from it?”***

It is interesting to note that the number of people agreeing with the statement equals the number of people disagreeing (50/50). Participant 2, 4, 6 and 7 admit the influence of their personal backgrounds on their meditation techniques. For example, “certain people are more likely to be receptive to meditation than others because of their cultures and religious background” (Participant 2) and “a Buddhist will rarely approach to Hinduism” (Participant 6). Despite that, Participant 8 provides a contrasting example of his teacher of teacher: “*he was born Islam family, grew up in Catholic schools, and finished a physics degree in university. And he became a very famous and Buddhism wise monk*”. Therefore, Participant 8, 1, 3 and 5 confirm that meditation is for everyone regardless of their backgrounds and cultures. All they need are just “open-mindedness” and “pure soul” (Participant 5).

***“Given the work-related benefits of meditation, some companies can become overreliant on the technique to reduce stress in employees. Indeed, there are also other ways to prevent employees from being subject to stress, such as re-organizing work and appropriate task delegation. They will be more effective in protecting the employee well-being in the first place than utilizing meditation program sessions as a quick fix later.”***

Nearly all of the interviewees (7 out of 8) strongly agree with the statement. It is always better to prevent the root causes from happening and help employees avoid pressure from work before it is too late (Participant 1, 5). Participant 3 and 6 also note that in reality, stress can come from any reason, such as love life and family or “*urgent tasks and unexpected ups and downs*”. In order to deal with unanticipated situations, meditation should not then be treated as a quick fix or a medication, it had better be treated as the essentials like “food water air” that help employees in the long term (Participant 3, 7). Respectively, meditation is not a cure-all and should not be overrated. An organization can simply promote mindfulness program as a way to cover up their poor working practices and management, which are the real causes of such

stress at work (Participant 2). Instead, the companies can additionally implement numerous strategies to solve the problem and holistically enhance the wellness of staff members (Participant 4, 8).

- Challenges

***“The benefits of mindfulness sessions have been noted to be more remarkable in the dynamic work environments in which employees have to intensively and constantly regulate their emotions than the repetitive job, for example, dealing with different customers, marketing, sale, etc.”***

While Participant 2 and 3 approve the statement, Participant 1 and 4 cannot give their opinions since they have not enough relevant work experience. To Participant 5, meditation all helps improve employees' lives no regardless of their professions. As for the rest, there has been a confusion over the definition of the word “*remarkable*”. It is hard to measure the “*remarkable*” degree of benefits between meditation in dynamic workplace and meditation in repetitive job (Participant 8). If the term “*more remarkable*” just means more conspicuous and clearer, then Participant 6 and 7 agree that they are able to see the benefits in dynamic work clearer in compared to repetitive one. However, if it also means that the advantages of practicing meditation in dynamic workplace are bigger, then they do not share the same ideas since they believe the benefits are the same for both working environments.

***“Although companies try to integrate meditation sessions in their companies with the hope of boosting work productivity, there are other intervening factors influencing the job performance that cannot be fully controlled, such as the health status and daily routine of employees at work.”***

Half of the respondents agree that there are a lot of factors which are beyond individuals' controls and meditation program is not the only contributor to the work productivity (Participant 2, 4, 5, 7). Only Participant 6 disapproves of the statement: “*Meditation will still increase the work productivity no matter what. It's like doing daily exercise to improve health ... your physical and mental immunity will increase even if you get sick*”. Others 3 show uncertainty towards the idea. Although Participant 3 does not know for sure since she has never been through this situation before at her workplace, she acknowledges that “*health status does have some influence [on*

*productivity], but meditation can help prevent other relevant and specific ailments*". In addition, meditation will allow one to accept that he is just a human and it is alright to be in low productivity if he becomes sick (Participant 1). Lastly, meditation will efficaciously save employees more energy to deal with the deadlines and pressures that cannot be avoided (Participant 8).

#### **4.4 Perceptions of Non-meditators of Mindfulness Meditation**

In order to ensure the objectivity and profundity of the thesis, interviews with non-meditators were conducted to provide more insight into the topic. As shown in Table 1 in the previous section, participant 9, 10 and 11 are non-meditators, in which participant 9 and 10 are employees at KMS and participant 11 is currently a lecturer at university. The question list for non-meditators is rather similar to that for meditators (see Appendix B). Firstly, they were asked to provide some basic personal information and their personal hobbies. Then, questions about their perceptions of meditation and how non-meditators view their relaxational activities with mindfulness were given out. Finally, the interviewer requested them to give opinions on statements about the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of implementing mindfulness program to the workplace that have been discussed in the literature review.

It is notable that each 3 non-meditator have different perspective of on the term "mindfulness" or "meditation". While Participant 9 regards meditation as "*a sport*" which "*helps people activate their bodies*", Participant 10 depicts meditation as "*a state of sitting still and not thinking of anything*". Participant 10 also connects meditation to "*breath regulation and silence*". Additionally, In Participant 11's opinion, mindfulness and meditation is a practice or an activities that "*help people to be aware of themselves, focus on themselves and their well-being*".

This paper will later demonstrate the commonalities and differences in perceptions of benefits, costs and challenges associated with meditation intervention at work between meditators and non-meditators based on the contrast matrices by Miles and Huberman (1994). The contrast matrix is employed with selected quotes from participants in order to group variables, address the similarities and discrepancies among interviewees' responses and therefore, highlight the outstanding results.

#### 4.4.1 Commonalities

Themes	Non-Meditators	Meditators
Do your current company have any official program promoting meditation for sake of employee development and productivity?	<p><b>No</b> (Participant 9, 10, 11)</p>	<p><b>No</b> (Participant 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)</p>
Advantages of Practicing Meditation	<p><i>“it looks like it help people <b>become calmer</b>. And it may <b>improve people’s body and life</b>”</i> (Participant 9)</p>	<p><i>“we can be a bit <b>calm down</b> and think that we don’t have to be busy all the time to be effective”</i> (Participant 1)</p> <p><i>“I think the main benefit is <b>being calmer</b> and more able to cope with work pressure”</i> (Participant 2)</p> <p><i>“if you meditate in the right way, after any session, you feel <b>peace and calm</b>”</i> (Participant 8)</p>
	<p><i>“...sitting still in silence can be <b>good for our mental health</b> ... become <b>more creative</b> If our minds are relaxed, we can</i></p>	<p><i>“you <b>see in different perspectives</b>, now you have more data, and then can <b>come up with different things</b> to do”</i> (Participant 8)</p>

	<p><i>become more <b>productive and work better</b></i>" (Participant 10)</p>	<p><i>"I come to the meeting, I listen, and then my body can tell me that what I need to do, right away, which option I need to pick up, and then very fast, very fast and then it comes more <b>productive</b>" (Participant 8)</i></p>
	<p><i>"it's probably about that <b>focus</b> and maybe <b>calmness</b>" (Participant 11)</i></p>	<p><i>"It gives me more time as for <b>focusing</b> what is really important" (Participant 2)</i></p> <p><i>"I'll disdain unnecessary factors and they can't influence me. So that's how my <b>focusing increases</b>" (Participant 4)</i></p>
<p><b>Disadvantages of Practicing Meditation</b></p>	<p><i>"I <b>don't think there are any disadvantages here</b>" (Participant 9, 10)</i></p> <p><i>"I <b>don't know</b> 'cause it's not something that I practice regularly and I'm not sure if I can think of anything" (Participant 11)</i></p>	<p><i>"I <b>don't know. I haven't seen any disadvantages.</b> I don't feel any harmful things caused by meditation" (Participant 4)</i></p> <p><i>"I <b>don't see [any disadvantages].</b> I don't think so on the downside [of meditation]" (Participant 8)</i></p>
<p><b>What is your ideal mindfulness meditation</b></p>	<p><i>"there must be an <b>introduction session for employees</b>, which involves benefits and techniques of meditation, some encouragement, and factors that</i></p>	<p><i>"an ideal program would be one in which <b>people were initially taught techniques</b> for meditation and mindfulness" (Participant 2)</i></p>

program in the workplace?	employees find interesting” (Participant 9)	
	“I think first of all it will need to [have] <b>resource properly</b> ... it’s likely that I will <b>have to arrange my work ... get them time to do it</b> ” (Participant 11)	“The meditation <b>teacher must be knowledgeable and experienced in teaching mindfulness</b> as well ... The company should also create opportunity for employees to <b>arrange their time</b> for meditation sessions” (Participant 3)
What are your relaxation methods results compared to the mindfulness training sessions (if it has been applied to your company) in terms of both advantages and disadvantage?	“ <b>The advantages</b> of both technique <b>are the same</b> in my opinion ... <b>both</b> meditation and playing soccer <b>provide the relaxation for the mental health</b> ” (Participant 10)	“although meditation and those relaxation techniques are different in form, their <b>ultimate purpose is the same in helping people to relax</b> ” (Participant 4)
Advantages of Implementing Meditation Program in the Workplace	“focus on what they’re doing, maybe making it easier to concentrate and to decide what’s important and achieve it. So it would be that <b>focus and concentration</b> ” (Participant 11)	“people being less involved in organisation politics, <b>less involved in activities that reduce their productivity</b> such as worrying and being concerned

		<p><i>about things that are not really important” (Participant 2)</i></p> <p><i>“helps people <b>focus on the work</b> without getting distraction” (Participant 3)</i></p>
<p><b>Disadvantages of Implementing Meditation Program in the Workplace</b></p>	<p><i>“at least some employers would <b>see it as being the solution to any stress release</b> and working problems. Like, “you shouldn’t be stressed because we’re gonna get you a mental program”. And it’s a bigger issue than that” (Participant 11)</i></p>	<p><i>“A lot of stress is caused by poor management, poor organization work. And there is a danger that in promoting meditation mindfulness program. An organization could just simply be <b>trying to cover up really poor working practices</b>” (Participant 2)</i></p> <p><i>“<b>There’s no one size fits all ...</b> The companies have to implement many strategies to solve the problem” (Participant 4)</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t think that <b>meditation can’t really answer everything</b> in the company, so that’s not really realistic” (Participant 8)</i></p>
<p><b>Challenges of Implementing Meditation Program in the Workplace</b></p>	<p><i>“I think it’s about <b>people actually having to time to do it</b>. Because I think when you teach people who are already very busy and have a lot of load of activities that they have to do, asking them to add something else to the schedule, I</i></p>	<p><i>“The possible disadvantages are <b>finding the time in their busy days</b>” (Participant 2)</i></p> <p><i>“...it’s <b>hard for employees to find time to meditate</b>” (Participant 3)</i></p>



	<i>think it's quite challenging"</i> (Participant 11)	
Since meditation generally helps employees to calm down, they may approach work in a more relaxing way and may think that they should not overburden themselves with work duties. Instead, they will tend to work less, spend more time with their families and have a longer rest.	<p><i>"There are some cases that meditation help employees to become calm so that they work better"</i> (Participant 9)</p> <p><i>"meditation improves what we are doing and being"</i> (Participant 10)</p> <p><i>"I certainly have a colleague who has a very many excellent sort of meditation and mindfulness activities with still work hard"</i> (Participant 11)</p>	<p><i>"You work less, but your work is more productive"</i> (Participant 1)</p> <p><i>"I think the productivity would increase"</i> (Participant 2)</p> <p><i>"meditation helps you focus more on the work, then you work smarter and have more time for your family"</i> (Participant 3)</p> <p><i>"Work less doesn't mean less productivity"</i> (Participant 4)</p> <p><i>"they can work less with more focus and increase the productivity"</i> (Participant 6)</p> <p><i>"Meditation can help you to work more effectively"</i> (Participant 8)</p>
Do you think your personal background, such as education, religion and family have any significant	<p><i>"I think no. People do what they like and what they are passionate about. I haven't seen any effects of religion or something similar on meditation choice"</i> (Participant 9)</p>	<p><i>"I think it's good for [everyone] no matter what culture you come from"</i> (Participant 1)</p> <p><i>"Vipassana is for everyone regardless of their backgrounds"</i> (Participant 3)</p>

effects on your meditation technique and the way you reap benefits from it/on the fact that you do not meditate?	<p><b><i>"I don't think that that educational or religious factors have any effect on my choice to meditate ... It's about the hobbies, not the backgrounds"</i></b> (Participant 10)</p> <p><b><i>"I can absolutely see the sense in seeing that some groups are more likely to meditate than another ...but I don't think that [personal backgrounds] really impacts on why I don't meditate"</i></b> (Participant 11)</p>	<p><b><i>"Meditators just need open-mindedness and pure soul ... those personal backgrounds are not important and relevant"</i></b> (Participant 5)</p> <p><b><i>"I don't think so ... It can be applicable to everyone"</i></b> (Participant 8)</p>
Given the work-related benefits of meditation, some companies can become overreliant on the technique to reduce stress in employees. Indeed, there are also other ways to prevent employees from being subject to stress, such as	<b><i>"In the workplace, stress is caused by numerous reasons ... Meditation may help employees control feelings and emotions better in the long term, but not truly beneficial to them in reducing stress in the short term"</i></b> (Participant 9)	<b><i>"Stress can be caused by numerous and any reasons ... Meditation is not a quick fix, but it will certainly help in the long term"</i></b> (Participant 3)
	<b><i>"To me meditation is one of the techniques and not the only one to reduce stress among employees. It depends on each job, each individual, each situation, each procedure and not one size fits all. We can't apply meditation to everything"</i></b> (Participant 10)	<b><i>"There's no one size fits all ... The companies have to implement many strategies to solve the problem"</i></b> (Participant 4)
	<b><i>"I think that It's very important to identify causes of stress and</i></b>	<b><i>"It's always better to prevent the root causes from</i></b>

<p>re-organizing work and appropriate task delegation. They will be more effective in protecting the employee well-being in the first place than utilizing meditation program sessions as a quick fix later.</p>	<p><i>know what to eliminate them ... Meditation can be very very useful, but <b>organization would see it as being an easy way to fix [problem]</b></i> (Participant 11)</p>	<p><i>happening in the first place</i>” (Participant 6)</p> <p><i>“I don’t go with people overrate meditation to become the trend ... If they start to <b>apply just meditation, I don’t think it will work</b> that way”</i> (Participant 8)</p>
<p>Although companies try to integrate meditation sessions in their companies with the hope of boosting work productivity, there are other intervening factors influencing the job performance</p>	<p><i>“I agree, it makes sense to me although I have no experience related to that”</i> (Participant 9)</p> <p><i>“I agree that there are many other factors influencing work productivity”</i> (Participant 10)</p>	<p>Yes, absolutely, <i>there are a lot of factors which are beyond individuals’ controls</i>” (Participant 2)</p> <p><i>“I accept. Those <b>intervening factors are surely the ones</b> that we <b>can’t control</b>”</i> (Participant 5)</p>
	<p><i>The problems of work productivity were there before the mindfulness intervention is applied. So I think <b>those intervening factors are not a justifiable reason to explain the fact that work productivity does not increase</b></i></p>	<p><i>“<b>Meditation will still increase the work productivity</b> no matter what. It’s like doing daily exercise to improve health ... your physical and mental immunity will increase even if you get sick”</i> (Participant 6)</p>

that cannot be fully controlled, such as the health status and daily routine of employees at work.	when integrating meditation sessions in their companies” (Participant 10)	
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Table 8: Commonalities - Contrast Matrix between Non-meditators and Meditators: Selected Quotes from Participants

#### 4.4.2 Differences

What do you think is a proper time for one mindfulness session in a company?	<p><i>“I think it will be like a yoga class, ranging from <b>30-60 minutes</b>”</i> (Participant 9)</p> <p><i>“it should be about <b>45 minutes</b>. I simply count it by deducing the lunch time from the lunch break”</i> (Participant 10)</p> <p><i>“If you just do 1 session and nothing else then it would need to be probably a few days to get the best benefit. If it is regular, then maybe 1 hour per week, <b>60 minutes</b> per week”</i> (Participant 11)</p>	<p><i>“It can’t be too long. If it’s too long it’s not working. But I think even small time is the beginning, I think so. If you enjoy and have a good meditation for <b>5 minutes</b>, tomorrow you might think ‘ok, perhaps <b>10 minutes</b>”</i> (Participant 1)</p> <p><i>“<b>10 minutes</b> meditation is perfect for it to work”</i> (Participant 2)</p> <p><i>“I think <b>15 minutes</b> are enough”</i> (Participant 3)</p> <p><i>“one session can last from <b>10 to 30 minutes</b>”</i> (Participant 4)</p>
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		<p><b>"15 minutes are okay"</b> (Participant 5)</p> <p><b>"30 minutes will be good for one session"</b> (Participant 6)</p> <p><b>"15 minutes to 30 minutes should be enough for usual people"</b> (Participant 8)</p>
<p><b>What are your relaxation methods results compared to the mindfulness training sessions (if it has been applied to your company) in terms of both advantages and disadvantage?</b></p>	<p><b>"football has more both advantages and disadvantages than meditation"</b> (Participant 9)</p> <p><b>"The advantages of both technique are the same in my opinion ... both meditation and playing soccer provide the relaxation for the mental health"</b> (Participant 10)</p>	<p><b>"mindfulness meditation would be generally more useful [than running] in the longer time in really helping people to live more balanced life where things are seen in perspectives"</b> (Participant 2)</p> <p><b>"I think all [other] relaxation techniques can help reduce my stress, but in the long term, they can't be as beneficial and profound as meditation"</b> (Participant 5)</p>
<p><b>Do you think your personal background, such as education, religion and family have any significant</b></p>	<p><b>"I think no. People do what they like and what they are passionate about. I haven't seen any effects of religion or something similar on meditation choice"</b> (Participant 9)</p>	<p><b>"The meditation technique depends on people's characteristics and health status ... Personal background and religion does have influence [on meditation]"</b> (Participant 4)</p>

effects on your meditation technique and the way you reap benefits from it/on the fact that you do not meditate?	<p><i>"I don't think that that educational or religious factors have any effect on my choice to meditate ... It's about the hobbies, not the backgrounds"</i> (Participant 10)</p> <p><i>"I can absolutely see the sense in seeing that some groups are more likely to meditate than another ...but I don't think that [personal backgrounds] really impacts on why I don't meditate"</i> (Participant 11)</p>	<p><i>"Yes, background does influence the technique choice. For example, a Buddhist will rarely approach to Hinduism..."</i> (Participant 6)</p> <p><i>"Yes, the background does have profound influence on meditation technique choice"</i> (Participant 7)</p>
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Table 9: Differences - Contrast Matrix between Non-meditators and Meditators: Selected Quotes from Participants

## 5 DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

This chapter aims to answer the 3 research questions stated in the introductory section 1.3 by examining the findings in terms of the literature review. Therefore, the structure of this chapter is followed by the 3 research questions, discussing the perceived benefits and costs of practicing meditation, the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of implementing mindfulness program at work, and lastly the commonalities and differences between meditators and non-meditators in relation to their perspectives of meditation intervention.

## **5.1 Question 1: What are the Perceived Benefits and Costs of Practicing Mindfulness Meditation in terms of Work Performance and Other Relaxation Techniques?**

### **5.1.1 With Regard to Job Performance**

#### **5.1.1.1 Benefits**

The literature review has brought up a general consensus that meditation provides numerous benefits to the practitioners in terms of their work productivity, mainly including improved social relationships, retained focusing ability, enhanced productivity and other advantages. This has been proved to be exceptionally true through the results of this thesis.

- **Emotional Regulation (ER)**

One helpful theoretical framework to understand the findings above is emotional regulation (ER). According to Gross (1999), ER is a process that each individual pays attention and processes emotions, which influences the way they experience and convey their feelings. Meditation then helps enhance the ER by promoting “mindful emotional regulation” (Chambers et al., 2009). This benefit appears in numerous answers of participants in the research. Veritably, 6 out of 8 respondents confirm their ability to have better ER after a while of practicing meditation (Participant 3, 4, 5, 7, 8). Specifically, Participant 4 underscores the advantage of becoming skillful at regulating his emotions so that he can see not only himself, but also others employees clearer. From that, he is able to listen to the stories of people objectively and proactively, and to give them better advice as well as solution.

- **Self-control, self-awareness, intuition & decision-making**

Being able to regulate emotions often implies being able to control oneself over negative experience and unwarranted actions. Respectively, by utilizing the fMRI technology, Modinos et al. (2010) ascertain that meditation has a remarkable effect on participant's reassessment of temperamental stimuli and reduces the level of negative emotional reactions that they are undergoing. Indeed, through practicing meditation, those temperamental impulses will be lessened and the decision-making ability will be improved with the transitory emotional highs that might insidious and hasty choice

being discarded (Teper & Inzlicht, 2014). Increased self-control, self-awareness, better intuition and decision-making ability are also mentioned in most of the responses of the interviewees. For example, by the time Participant 4 instantly realizes that he is being angry, his anger reduces by half and slowly disappears before he is able to put it out into real action. Meditation helps change Participant 4 and 5 from being bad-tempered employees to the much calmer ones. Furthermore, by watching their emotions and bodies attentively as well as continuously, the intuition of meditators is significantly enhanced. Therefore, they are able to know which business deal and project to take (Participant 8), to predict potential problems better (Participant 5), or simply to know what to do and what not to do (Participant 4).

- Leadership

In Participant 8's experience, when he is able to make better decisions and provide more effective solutions to the work problems, people start to listen to him and trust him more. He also proactively listens to people by being fully present in every moment, which then helps cultivate congenial and trustworthy atmosphere for his colleagues and clients. Thus, his ability to influence others, or his leadership, is considerably enhanced with better social awareness and social relationship. The experience of Participant 8 indeed corroborates the statement made by Arias (2008) that there is a noteworthy improvement leadership performance of executives working organizations after 20-week meditation training program.

- Focus

There is one more benefit of meditation in the literature review that has proved to be justifiable through the research: retained focusing ability. According to Adler & Benbunan-Fich (2011) too much multitasking may backfire and account for low effectiveness and poor performance in a dynamic and fast-moving occupational environment. Therefore, multitasking can be seen as contradictory phenomenon with effective focusing at the workplace. Indeed, the KMS Technology company requires the employees to follow the "session-working", meaning that they have to focus on one task at one session before moving to the another one. For most people at KMS, the attention span of people is just approximately 30 minutes, but for Participant 6, she can perform a task continuously without break in more than 1 hour. Others meditators also assert that their ability to focus is greatly improved and retained with mindfulness



practice. In fact, the result is echoed in the findings of Manna et al. (2010) and Foureur et al., (2013), which state that if employees can practice meditation regularly, their ability to stay focused will be strongly strengthened and work performance will be remarkably enhanced.

In addition, meditation mindfulness not only helps improve attention span but also assists in deciding which span should be focused in order to boost decision-making ability and also job performance (Seppala, 2015). By way of illustration, Participant 2 has emphasized this benefit in his response. He described meditation as the “*lifebelt*” to his work productivity. Meditation has helped him avoid getting involved in “*dysfunctional behaviors*” and wasting considerable time worrying about things that are not important. From then, he is able to calm his mind and focus on things that are truly important, such as working with good people, teaching his students and doing more research papers.

- Integrity

Furthermore, KMS Technology company bears a close resemblance to businesses in Silicon Valley in which they are all famous for entrepreneurial, international-linked, innovation-driven and fast-moving characteristics. It is then easy to fall into the trap of opportunistic behaviors, immoral work ethics, unfulfilling greed and work-life imbalance (Plante, 2010). However, Participant 8 shares in the interview the factors that make KMS stand out in the IT-sourcing market are innovation and integrity. Since he is a “hard-core” meditator, he becomes more sensitive of surroundings than usual. He can, therefore, have more data to analyze and think in different perspectives, which greatly contributes the innovative attribute of the company. Finally, thanks to meditation with better intuition and self-control, he knows exactly what is the right thing to pursue in business, so that the core values of KMS Technology always reside in ethics, honesty and explicitness. Therefore, it can be seen that meditation does play an important role in boosting the integrity of a company.

- Work productivity

All of the benefits mentioned above are generally seen the contributors to the success and productivity of an organization, ranging from ER, leadership, communication skills, social relationship to work commitment, focusing ability and business ethics. Those

can be the results of enhancement in cognitive ability gained from the contemplative practice. In fact, mindfulness meditation has significantly positive impacts on cerebral activities with wider prefrontal cortex, denser neural gray area, and decreased amygdala, which are known as being conducive to the process of learning, memory, perspective taking, emotional regulation and adaptive reactions to stress (Creswell et al., 2007; Modinos et al., 2010; Davidson et al. 2013). As a matter of fact, it is worthy to note that nearly all interviewees agreed that mindfulness meditation has positive influences on their work productivity.

#### **5.1.1.2 Costs**

According to Sharpio (1992), meditation has been widely known to have more positive effects than negative ones. In fact, there are only few investigations into the drawbacks of practicing meditation. One of the notable downsides of meditation is that it might not be suitable for everyone. For instance, people with PTSD should be especially cautious when taking up the practice. Therefore, participants should be screened carefully to check their suitability for practicing mindfulness (Lustyk et al., 2009). Participant 1 also believes that meditation is not a cure-all and might not be suitable for some occasions. To her, it is better to go outside and meet people rather than staying in silence at times. By the same token, the organization may even try to devise a “lighter version” of meditation so that it will better fit with the majority of employees (Participant 8).

Another bane of meditation is that it may yield some unanticipated symptoms such as insomnia, loss of appetite, feelings of anxiety, psychosis, disorganized speech and depersonalization (Lustyk et al., 2009). However, the findings of this thesis demonstrate a rather similar phenomenon to that of Sharpio (1992) as none of the meditators in their interview reported those signs of illness by Lustyk et al. (2009). Indeed, as stated in the findings section, half of the respondents (50/50) said they had not seen anything wrong or harmful to them with the mindfulness technique. Even though the others acknowledge some disadvantages associated with meditation, they assert that those problems with mindfulness are perceived by others, not of their own. For example, meditation is said to be time-consuming but it will rather save more time for meditators later on (Participant 2) and may become a “*good investment in time*” (Participant 4). This idea is similar to that of Mohandas Gandhi, one of the greatest leaders of the 20th century who once stated that “I have so much to accomplish today

that I have to meditate for two hours instead of one ”. While Participant 7 and 8 confirm that practicing mindfulness might shrink their circle of friends because they now rarely share the same viewpoints with other people, they only see it as a challenge, rather than a disadvantage. Nevertheless, the study was conducted on the small scale of sample, so the results cannot be generalized and used to disprove the unexpected symptoms put forward by Lustyk et al. (2009).

### **5.1.2 In Comparison to Other Forms of Relaxation**

According to Richardson & Rothstein (2008), there are also existing stress management training programs, which specifically concentrate on relaxation, behavioral, cognitive techniques and have proven successful in decreasing distress and depression at work. Although such relaxation programs yield similar results on reducing stress with meditation training (Jain et al., 2007), mindfulness workplace intervention has distinctive impact on reducing wandering and contemplation and therefore, boosts the quality of sleep and recuperation from work tension (Querstret & Cropley, 2012). However, whether such argument is valid remains debatable in this survey since there is a wide variation in opinions among participants on the relationship between meditation and other recreational activities as shown in the Findings section above. It is even highly recommended by Participant 8 that the organization combine all the two techniques to promote the holistic well-being of the employees. Accordingly, further research is needed to investigate the employees' perceptions of the difference in work-related benefits or effects of mindfulness meditation and other forms of relaxation.

## **5.2 Question 2: What are the employees' perceptions of the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of mindfulness session program incorporated in their companies?**

### **5.2.1 Advantages**

It has been discussed in the literature review that although there was data supporting the negative relationship between mindfulness in the workplace and turnover intention, when taking the dimensions of “work engagement” into consideration, this correlation was insignificant (Dane & Brummel, 2013). Indeed, only a few empirical researches were established to prove the actual relationship between mindfulness training

programs and workplace productivity (Hyland et al., 2015). However, this thesis might be useful in filling the gap through the finding (see section 4.3.2) stating that most of the potential advantages of meditation program described by interviewees are similar to those of their own personal practice, which have placed much emphasis on work productivity.

### **5.2.2 Disadvantages**

In spite of the aforementioned promising benefits, some researchers have shown several concerns that mindfulness meditation training programs may backfire and generate unintentional outcomes that are in non-compliance with the organizational bottom line. For example, while Seppala (2015) only outlines the benefits of implementing meditation into employee training program of the company, Brendel (2017) appears to be more objective and impartial by indicating that such program can have inherent limitations. Although half of the respondents say they have not seen any disadvantages of practicing meditation, they all then acknowledge some possible costs associated with bringing the technique into the workplace. Those disadvantages are the difficulty in finding time to take part in meditative sessions (Participant 2, 3, 4), this risk of lack of human resource for work (Participant 1), the dilemma of getting into “transitional phrase” (Participant 6) and the danger of creating more pressure for employees to join (Participant 7).

In terms of the disadvantages that have been examined in the literature review, the interviewees also share both similar and contrasting viewpoints on such costs. Specifically, workers may explicit fulfill tasks in a way that fail to conform the company's goals and ideals as mindfulness can motivate them to act in the preference for their own interests and values (Ericson et al., 2014). This will likely have a harmful effect on job productivity, especially when the nature of the work is monotonous and repetitive. In other words, the employees may approach job in a more relaxed way with the belief that they should prefer spending time with their families to overburdening themselves with their work duties. Even though this phenomenon has been acknowledged to be true by some interviewees (Participant 1, 2), most of the respondents rather look at the occurrence on the bright side. To them, the meditative practice can help them become calmer and focus more on the task so that they can finish the job earlier and spend

more time on their other preferable activities. It may look like they are working less, but it does not mean their work is less productive (Participant 2, 3, 4, 6, 8).

In fact, employees who meditate frequently can even feel more responsible to create more work for themselves and exceed the expectation of employers (Participant 7, 8). Meditation is also said to have significant benefits on innovation and ability to think differently of staff members (Participant 1, 3, 4, 8). These beliefs and personal experience contrast sharply with the statement put forward by Giang (2015) about the inherent side effects of mindfulness on creativity and the “avoidance risk” described by Brendel (2015) in the literature review. Therefore, it is suggested that there is a serious need for managers to fully evaluate such pros and cons of applying mindfulness training to the organization in order to better understand when and how the program can boost work performance versus when it may not.

Another problem of implementing mindfulness intervention to the company is that employers fall into the trap of abandoning all other coping mechanisms. It is important not to forget there also exist many other great techniques than can help staff members cope with work distress and life challenges. Mindfulness practice can not always be used to alleviate stress and act as cure-all (Lomas, 2015). According to National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NIH) (2016), meditation should not be treated as a replacement for common health care or as a reason to postpone seeing a doctor. The statement has been proven to be quite valid since nearly all of the interviewees (7 out of 8) strongly agree with this opinion. In their way of thinking, it is better not to become over-reliant on the meditative technique and overrate it as a quick fix or release to any stress problems at work. Indeed, the companies should be able to identify and prevent the root causes from happening in the first place, such as poor management practice or inappropriate task delegation. They can additionally implement numerous strategies to solve the problem and holistically enhance the wellness of staff members. It can be further deducted that the responsibility for individual’s well-being at work should not solely reside in each employee. Instead, the whole organization had better act collectively as the preliminary to ensure employees are not exploited and their welfare are strongly protected. In such a world of collective action, there would be no need for individual to cope through meditation as the problems prompting meditation program would have been removed.

In addition, meditation may yield unfavorable results if people feel that they are being forced to stay mindful in the program instead of voluntarily participating (Hyland et al., 2015). This argument is backed up by Participant 7 who says that people might object to the program if they feel pressured and compulsory to join in. Furthermore, despite the fact that some people like meditating, they may prefer practicing the technique on their own or find it awkward and uncomfortable to do it with a group of people, especially professional colleagues. Brendel (2015) illustrates this point with an example that some employees in a company gathered together after weeks of practicing mindfulness meditation in the workplace and told the group leader that they would prefer the daily exercise to be voluntary and practice of their own volition. Nevertheless, Participant 1 believes in the opposite, stating that employees can gain benefit from the collective power from meditation group at work. While each argument above is only supported or disproved by one interviewee, it does imply that the worries about such potential downsides of meditation are legitimate and should be taken into careful consideration.

### **5.2.3 Challenges**

As mentioned in the literature review section, multinational enterprises are joining the global movement of meditation practice for the sake of improvement in the productiveness of the workforce, one of the most valuable competitive advantages that needs securing (Hyland et al., 2015). Certainly, there are a variety of inevitable challenges affiliated with such mindfulness intervention. In fact, the surge of interest in such practice will likely result in deficiency of experienced facilitators, qualified coaches and properly trained organizational personnel aiming to lead mindfulness training. The employees may therefore not be able to reap full benefits of meditation sessions (Chaskalson, 2011). That challenge is legitimate through the results of this thesis as Participant 2, 3 and 8 also highlight the importance of having adequate resources and experienced teachers available to offer help and keep staff on track of the practice. Moreover, since there is a lack of common theoretical perception for the scientific study on mindfulness exercise (Ospina et al., 2007), corporates might not have enough mature framework to execute meditation session and apply it incorrectly (Participant 8). Indeed, Carrette and King (2004) argue that mindfulness

program could be utilized as a way to placate dissatisfied employees, retaining the status quo, and eventually control and maneuver the personnel. Thus, it is suggested that the company should guarantee both sufficient resources as well as implementation strategy that has been proved to be effective before holding mindfulness meditation session in the workplace.

In the literature review, Glomb et al. (2011) and Vogus (2011) have noted that the benefits are more remarkable in the work environments that are dynamic and require intensively emotional regulation. In particular, dynamic job is likely to be affiliated with unpredictability and time pressure, which are one of the main causes of stress and emotional arousals (Klein, 1998). Nonetheless, the Findings chapter shows that there has been a confusion over the definition of the word “*remarkable*” for interviewees. It is indeed hard to measure the “*remarkable*” degree of benefits between meditation in dynamic workplace and meditation in repetitive job (Participant 8). Therefore, it also implies that future research should be conducted to further explore this facet of mindfulness meditation practice in the occupational environment.

As stated previously, there is still little empirical evidence proving the relationship between mindfulness workplace and job performance, especially when accounting for all the dimensions of “work engagement” (Dane & Brummel, 2013). In fact, there are other intervening factors influencing the job performance that cannot be fully controlled, such as the health status and daily routine of employees at work. For example, assuming that people are most productive in the morning, employers should encourage staff members to spend the few initial hours of the working day concentrating on significant and cognitive tasks like strategic assignment or important meetings and conversations. Yet, across the interviewees, participants share diverse viewpoints on that statement. Particularly, only Participant 6 disapproves with the statement whereas the others show uncertainties or simply agree with the notion that there are other factors beyond individuals’ controls and meditation program is not solely a contributor to the work productivity. As a result, whether there is a significant relationship between mindfulness workplace and job performance is left questionable due to firstly the diversity in answers of participants, and secondly the nature of the research methodology. Since the purpose of qualitative interview is only to explore the

perceptions of selected interviewees, it cannot establish the correlations between variables. Therefore, the statement should be examined in a quantitative study instead.

### **5.3 Question 3: What are the commonalities and differences in perspectives of staff members regarding mindfulness and productivity performance between employees who meditate frequently and those who do not?**

Since there has been little investigation into the difference in viewpoints of non-meditators and meditators on mindfulness, that area was not discussed in the previous literature review section of this paper. Moreover, the paper only aims to explore and compare such perceptions through interview questions in order to provide further insight as well as ensure the objectivity. As a result, instead of interpreting the empirical data in light of established findings and theories like the two research questions above, this section will simply present the narrative explanations on the commonalities and differences drawn from the Contrast Matrices in Table 8 and 9.

As stated in the literature review, this thesis uses a working definition of Hyland et al. (2015) in stating that meditation comprises three key elements: present-focused awareness, external and internal attention, and receptive observation without any judgements, reactions or manipulations. The findings section has shown that the non-meditators share different ideas on what the 2 terms “mindfulness” and “meditation” mean to them, but only Participant 11 mentions the factor associating with being “*aware of themselves*” in her answer. Indeed, there are plenty of people, including meditators, thinking that being mindful and being relaxed are the same thing whereas the goal in mindfulness is awareness, not the later. Falk (2017) strongly believes that people need to stop judging how aware they are by how relaxed they feel, but rather by how closely they notice what is actually happening. Veritably, meditating Participant 5, 6 and 7 also equate the mindfulness meditation with relaxation. Therefore, it can be implied that not only the non-meditators have an incomplete or even incorrect notions of the meditative technique, but also the meditators may liken it with other relaxational activities, especially for those who are just novices in meditation.



### 5.3.1 Commonalities

From the Table 8, it can be seen that non-meditators share numerous similarities in viewpoints with meditators. As for the background, there is no official program promoting meditation across all of the interviewees' workplaces. In relation to advantages of practicing mindfulness, non-meditating Participant 9 surmises that meditation might *"help people become calmer"* and Participant 1 and 2 confirm this benefit via their answers. Moreover, creativity and productivity will be enhanced in Participant 10's supposition. Indeed, Participant 8 says that practicing mindfulness does boost his ability to think differently as well as work productively. Retained focusing ability is the last benefit appears in both response of non-meditating Participant 11 and meditating Participant 2 and 4. Finally, all the non-meditators state that they do not know or cannot think of any disadvantages of the mindfulness practice, which is also similar to the answers of Participant 4 and 8.

With regard to an ideal mindfulness meditation program in the workplace, both non-meditating Participant 9 and meditating Participant 2 suggest that the program should have introductory sessions teaching people the techniques as well as benefits of meditation. As for Participant 11, she expects an exemplary mindfulness intervention to have proper resources of teachers and ensure that employees will have enough time to take part in, which relatively resembles with the idea of participant 3. In addition, Participant 10 postulates that *"both meditation and playing soccer provide the relaxation"*. This is also echoed in the response of Participant 4 when he believes that *"ultimate purpose [of meditation and relaxation techniques] is the same in helping people to relax"*.

Likewise, meditators and non-meditators have some thinking in common on the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of applying meditation program to the occupational environment. In particular, Participant 11 assumes that meditation would help increase the *"focus and concentration"*; in fact, Participant 2 and 3 think the same. One noteworthy costs of such program in the workplace is that *"some employers would see it [meditation intervention] as being the solution to any stress release and working problems"* (Participant 11). Indeed, *"there is no one size fits all"* (Participant 4) and *"meditation can't really answer everything"* (Participant 8). Even worse, the organization can utilize meditation scheme to *"cover up really poor working practices"*

(Participant 2). Lastly, finding the time to join in mindfulness sessions at work with already busy schedules is believed to a significant challenge of the strategy (Participant 2, 3, 11).

When being asked about what they think of a phenomenon in which employees tend to work less after mindfulness practice, all non-meditators (Participant 9, 10, 11) state that meditation actually improves the work productivity, not decreasing job performance. Other meditators agree with such opinion as well, stating that “*work less doesn’t mean less productivity*” (Participant 4) and employees can still “*work less with more focus and increase the productivity*” (Participant 6). Furthermore, the 3 non-meditators all think their personal backgrounds have no influence on their choice to meditate. Meditation is indeed seen as “*applicable to everyone*” (Participant 8) “*regardless of their backgrounds*” (Participant 3).

Speaking of the occurrence when the company becomes too overreliant on the meditative technique and misuses it to deal with every stress and working problems, non-meditating Participant 10 admits that meditation is “*not the only one [technique] to reduce stress*”. Participant 4 shares the same notion in saying that “*there’s no one size fits all ... The companies have to implement many strategies to solve the problems*”. In particular, it is utmost important to identify root causes of stress (Participant 11) and to prevent them from happening in the first place (Participant 6). Similarly, Participant 8 does not hold the organization that “*overrate[s] meditation*” and sees mindfulness session as “*being an easy way to fix [problem]*” (Participant 11) in high regard. Both non-meditating Participant 9 and meditating Participant 3 believes that meditation will be beneficial to employees in reducing stress in the long-term rather than being used as a quick fix. In fact, in order to reap the long-term benefits of mindfulness training, Matthews (2017) suggest the company not only offer temporary and short-term mindfulness courses, but also embed them into the one of core values of business operation.

The final challenge with implementing mindfulness meditation in the workplace that has been demonstrated in the literature review is that there are others intervening and uncontrollable factors influencing work productivity. The statement has been acknowledged by both non-meditators (Participant 9, 10) and meditators (Participant

2, 5). On the other hand, Participant 10 asserts that the problems of work productivity have already been in the organization before. Thus, such intervening elements are not “*a justifiable reason to explain the fact that work productivity does not increase when integrating meditation sessions*”. In fact, Participant 6 compares meditation practice to daily exercise, meaning that “*meditation will still increase the work productivity*” like the way daily exercise helps increase the “*physical and mental immunity*”.

### 5.3.2 Differences

Despite the fact the meditators and non-meditators have numerous viewpoints on the meditative technique in common, there are also some distinct ideas among them. For example, it is interesting to note that the maximum time for one mindfulness session in most meditators’ opinion is 30 minutes, whereas non-meditators state it should be more than half an hour. Moreover, while non-meditating Participant 9 and 10 say that meditation has either the same or less benefits compared to other recreational activities, meditating Participant 2 and 5 disprove this thinking by revealing such relaxation techniques cannot be as “*useful*” and “*profound*” as meditation through their experience. Finally, all non-meditators assert that educational or religious background do not have any impact on their mindfulness choice, other meditators share an exact opposite belief.

The final challenge that has been notably mentioned in the literature review is that people may tend to think of using sedatives, going on company retreats or vacations and doing yoga as alternative panaceas for stress and depression in the workplace. Indeed, when employees are first introduced to meditation, they will likely perceive the session of “*sitting still*” to be boring and thus, useless for stress reduction. This idea is confirmed by Participant 9, who admits he does not like “*sitting still in one place*” as well. Despite so, he adds that “*when meditation is better well-known, people will start to practice it*”. Participant 11 thinks that the viewpoint is probably true for most people as well, however, she asserts it depends on characteristics of individuals and their willingness to make commitment to practicing meditation. Similarly, Participant 10 believes that people will tend to agree with the sentence but as for him, he has no opinion about that statement since he has not researched about it before. He also gives

an interesting analogy like this: *“It’s like people who don’t play soccer will wonder why we have to chase a ball very tiringly and even sometimes exchange blows with each other. So I think people who haven’t done any meditation will think of it in the same way”*.

On the other hand, the stance here is employees do not necessarily go outside to find externally stimulating factors for recreation or relaxation. While the tranquil sceneries with mountains and lakes are believed to incredibly enhance the inner peace and calmness, people can still enjoy the serenity only by sitting quietly in their own room. Both meditating Participant 2 and 8 also share that they now prefer to sit at home and meditate than going outside and travelling. In fact, Participant 2 states the fact he used to be a fanatic of travelling was due to his true dissatisfaction with his inner self. Participant 8 has also strengthened this idea by affirming that meditation helps him enjoy every moment and everywhere. He does not need to be in tranquil sceneries or famous sightseeings yet still feel truly peaceful and happy. Moreover, employees can now participate in the mindfulness training on the company campus or directly from their desk, which would save the organization a considerable amount of money instead of joining other activities (Hyland et al., 2015).

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 Main Findings**

While people have long seen meditation as a religious terminology practiced by only monks and nuns, there have been a boom in researches and groundworks investigating into the nature, pros and cons of the practice for recent decades. Indeed, meditation has been proved to be not only favorable for physiological and psychological conditions, but also act as an impediment to suffering from stresses and strains (Davidson et al., 2003; Mrazek et al., 2008, Krygier et al., 2013). Therefore, an inquiry whether enterprises and firms should integrate mindfulness training programs into their organizations is often put forward among employers. However, there is little empirical examination into the benefits, costs and challenges of such interventions in the occupational settings and from the viewpoints of employees (Dane & Brummel, 2013; Brendel, 2017). Although this thesis cannot give precise answers to the question

above since it is based on qualitative interview methodology with a small scale of 11 interviewees, it can, to a certain extent, provide helpful evidence and insights in order to further explore the phenomenon.

### **6.1.1 Question 1**

Besides the 3 work-related benefits (improved social relationships, retained focusing ability, enhanced productivity) that have been elaborated in the literature review section, meditation are said to provide more advantages by meditating interviewees, such as ER, self-control, self-awareness, intuition, decision-making, leadership, creativity and integrity. Along with those salutary effects are the potential costs of practicing mindfulness meditation. Despite the fact half of the respondents say meditation does not have any disadvantages to them, others admit that meditation might not be suitable for everyone or every occasion and that the practice might be seen as time-consuming for some people. Therefore, it is suggested that participants should be screened carefully to check their suitability for practicing mindfulness or the organization should try to devise a “lighter version” of meditation so that it will better fit with the majority of employees. Moreover, since there is a wide variation in the viewpoints of participants on the relationship between meditative practice and other recreational activities, the combination of the two techniques is endorsed to holistically promote the wellness of staff members.

### **6.1.2 Question 2**

In terms of the workplace intervention, results show that most of the potential advantages of meditation program described by interviewees are similar to those of their own personal practice, especially about the benefit in enhancing work productivity. However, there are inevitable disadvantages affiliated with mindfulness sessions at work that are mentioned in literature review and then either approved or disapproved by the interviewees. While meditation intervention is argued to have a harmful effect on job productivity when it seems to make people spend less time performing tasks at work, interviewees rather look at the phenomenon on the bright side, stating that they actually finish the job earlier since meditation helps them better focus on work and thus saves them more time to do others things. In fact, employees

who meditate frequently can even feel more responsible to create more work for themselves and exceed the expectation of employers.

Another problem to avoid when implementing mindfulness intervention to the company is that employers might easily fall into the trap of abandoning all other coping mechanisms, become over-reliant on the meditative technique and overrate it as a quick fix or release to any stress problems at work. Indeed, the companies should be able to identify and prevent the root causes from happening, such as poor management practice or inappropriate task delegation. The employee should not be left alone to deal with distress at work; the whole organization had better take responsibility and act collectively to ensure the well-being of staff members in the first place. From then, the problems prompting meditation program would have been removed and there would be no need for individual to cope with stress through meditation training programs.

The discussion session above has also listed a few more disadvantages of the mindfulness program. Particularly, meditation may yield unfavorable results if people feel that they are being forced to stay mindful in the program instead of voluntarily participating. Moreover, despite the fact that some people like meditating, they may prefer practicing the technique on their own or find it awkward and uncomfortable to do it with a group of people, whereas some may rather see it as an advantage to gain collective power from the meditation group. Therefore, it is essential that managers fully assess such advantages and disadvantages of integrating mindfulness training to the organization, so that they can become more aware of when and how the program can enhance job performance versus when it may not.

As for the challenges, there is a likelihood that there will be a shortage of experienced teachers due to a sudden surge of interest in the meditation, and also a lack of mature framework to conduct the mindfulness training. Thus, it is important that the company guarantee the those crucial prerequisites for holding mindfulness meditation session in the workplace, so that the intervention will not generate unexpected consequences and create bad impressions on employees. Moreover, there are other intervening factors influencing the job performance that cannot be fully controlled in which work productivity cannot be increased even when the mindfulness session is incorporated.

The organization is then recommended to be conscious of those elements and finding the way to ensure the benefits of such meditation interventions.

### **6.1.3 Question 3**

Third, since the paper only aims to explore and compare the perceptions of non-meditators and meditators through interview questions with the purpose of providing further insight as well as ensuring the objectivity of the study, there is not much interpretation of the data based on established literature review and theories that has been made. From the discussion chapter, it is worth noting that not only the non-meditators have an incomplete or even incorrect notions of the meditative technique, but also the meditators may equate it with other relaxational activities, which is not acceptable according to the arguments of Falk (2017) and other researchers.

In terms of commonalities, non-meditators do share numerous similarities in viewpoints with meditators. As for the background, there is no official program promoting meditation across all of the interviewees' workplaces. With regard to advantages of practicing mindfulness, non-meditators surmise benefits that are also mentioned by meditators, such as calmness, creativity, productivity and focusing ability. Notably, all the non-meditators state that they do not know or cannot think of any disadvantages of the mindfulness practice like some meditators. When talking about an ideal mindfulness meditation program in the workplace, non-meditators resemble with meditators in which there should be introductory sessions teaching people the techniques as well as benefits of meditation, proper resources of teachers appropriate time arrangement for employees to join.

Likewise, meditators and non-meditators have some thinking in common on the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of applying meditation program to the occupational environment. In particular, they both state that meditation would help increase the focus and concentration ability of practitioners. Non-meditators also agree that the disadvantage of meditation training program is that it can be used as a quick fix and cure-all for every distress problems at work. Moreover, finding the time to join in mindfulness sessions at work with already busy schedules is believed to be a significant challenge of the meditative strategy by meditators and external targets. When being

asked about what they think of a phenomenon in which employees tend to work less after mindfulness practice, all non-meditators state that meditation actually improves the work productivity, not decreasing job performance like other meditators. Furthermore, the 3 non-meditators all think their personal backgrounds have no influence on their choice to meditate, which are the same with half of the meditators' opinions. They also agree the meditation is not the only solution to every stress problem and it will be beneficial to employees in reducing stress in the long-term rather than being used as a quick fix.

On the other hand, there are few contrasts in thinking between non-meditators and meditators in relation to the meditation training program in the workplace. Interestingly, the maximum time for one mindfulness session in most meditators' opinion is 30 minutes, whereas non-meditators believe it should be more than half an hour. Moreover, while non-meditators say that mindfulness practice has either the same or less benefits compared to other recreational activities, the meditators disprove this thinking by revealing such relaxation techniques cannot be as helpful and significant as meditation through their experience. Lastly, although some non-meditators state they do not like the act of sitting still in meditation sessions and may perceive the practice as boring, meditators have an opposite view by sharing that the action of not moving and thinking indeed provides them inner peace, happiness and self-satisfaction.

#### **6.1.4 Main Question**

Finally, given all the benefits, costs and issues of meditation that have been elaborated in the literature review as well as findings and discussion, should companies implement the mindfulness session into the workplace? The answer is: it depends. It depends on the physical and mental characteristics of employees and on organizational culture to safeguard the factor of suitability. Meditation training in the workplace is like others interventions in which each has both positive and negative sides. It is indeed about the seriousness of employers in implementing the practice and their way of holding meditative session that make the difference. They have to be truly careful to evaluate all the pros, cons and challenges associated with the intervention as stated above. Moreover, they have to be prudent not to become overreliant on the mindfulness



technique and misuse it in the workplace. Eventually, if the company decides to bring it into the office, they should make sure that they have sufficient resources such as experienced teachers and physical space to organize the interventions as well as a mature operational framework that has been shown to be effective and applicable. The organizations are also recommended to combine meditation training with other recreational activities to enhance the overall well-being of the workers, such as yoga, sports and retreats.

## **6.2 Implications for International Business**

Although there are ample researches into the benefits of meditation on physiological and psychological states, there are few practical inquiries examining mindfulness meditation from a workplace standpoint. There might be the case in which mindfulness training does more harm than good. How and when to apply mindfulness meditation to a HR employee development program should be evaluated carefully, especially in a dynamic work situation with people from diverse backgrounds. In fact, inappropriate implementation of such training could create bad impressions on staff members and prevent them from joining more sessions in the future. Thus, the thesis aims to fill the gap by trying to answer the research questions in order to provide the CEOs, executives and especially HR managers both pros and cons of implementing meditation practice to their organizations with regard to the viewpoints of employees from qualitative interviews. Accordingly, they can then have a better understanding of methodologies as well as strategies to introduce mindfulness training to their HR development programs.

This study can be used as a reference information and data for researchers investigating into the viewpoints of employees on meditative technique and its implementation to the workplace. Although the findings of the study cannot reach a high level of reliability due to its limited pool of participants, a few justifiable answers and suggestible solutions are elicited to enhance both the work productivity and well-being of employees at work.

For employers at KMS in particular, there had been a failed effort in popularizing meditation at work before and there was not even a strong desire to have one official

mindfulness training program among the current employees, even with the meditators, Therefore, it is suggested the company should instead try to devise a “lighter version” of meditation practice and combine with other existing relaxation activities at the company to increase the level of suitability and gain more commitment from the staff members.

For CEOs, executives and researchers in meditation in general, it has been noted that the responsibility of coping with stress at work should not solely reside in employees and meditation training programs. Instead, the organizations should identify and prevent the root causes from happening in the first place and avoid becoming overreliant on the technique. From that, it might be not necessary to have an official meditation program in the occupational settings. However, if the employers believe meditation truly yields significant benefits on work productivity they are aiming for, they can try to apply it provided that they have abundant human and space resources as well as a formal and effective framework to conduct the intervention.

### **6.3 Limitations and Suggestion for Future Research**

It is essential that specific limitations of this thesis are addressed in order to be better aware of the significance of the findings and also provide more suggestions and practical data for future research. Indeed, the biggest limitation of this research is that there is no official mindfulness training in all of workplaces of interviewees, which considerably restrict the understanding of how a typical meditation intervention is perceived by the employees in real life. Despite so, the findings in the section above can serve as foundation and useful information for future research, which should employ a better recruitment of samples that have validated mindfulness program in the workplace.

As stated before, since the methodology of this study is qualitative interview, the paper only aims to explore the perceptions of selected participants of certain phenomena and established theories, not trying to establish correlation among any variables and factors. For example, there is still little empirical evidence proving the relationship between mindfulness workplace and job performance, especially when accounting for all the dimensions of “work engagement” (Dane & Brummel, 2013) and the findings of

study cannot confirm or reject such correlation. Therefore, the results cannot be seen as strongly reliable with inherent limitations of such qualitative interview methodology. In addition, since the study was conducted on a small scale of sample without scientific sampling method, the findings cannot be generalized and only valid for the sample of interviewees' responses. However, those matters can still be investigated evidently with quantitative research or in a more exhaustive study.

Moreover, since there has been little examination into the differences between non-meditators on mindfulness techniques, the literature review on such part of this paper becomes limited and the interviews could not fully investigate the similarities and dissimilarities in notions of the 2 groups with regard to meditation technique and application. Thus, future studies can either replicate the conditions in different circumstances or improve on the shortcomings and drawbacks of this thesis since it would be interesting to examine possible discrepancies between viewpoints of meditators and non-meditators.

In the literature review, Glomb et al. (2011) and Vogus (2011) have noted that the benefits are more remarkable in the work environments that are dynamic and require intensively emotional regulation. Nonetheless, the Findings chapter shows that there has been a confusion over the definition of the word "*remarkable*" for interviewees. It is indeed hard to measure the "*remarkable*" degree of benefits between meditation in dynamic workplace and meditation in repetitive job. More clarification on such word can thus be made in the future research to gain newer insights into the phenomenon. Lastly, further research may consider investigating the employees' perceptions of the difference in work-related benefits or effects of mindfulness and other forms of relaxation as the interviewees in this study rather mostly mention such difference in the technique of practicing meditation.

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## APPENDICES

### A. Interview Questions for Meditators

<b>MEDITATORS - INTERVIEW QUESTION LIST</b>	
<b><i>Theory/Existing Research Findings</i></b>	<b><i>Potential Interview Questions</i></b>
<p>A Conceptual Overview of Mindfulness Meditation</p> <p>Contrasting Conceptualizations of Mindfulness Meditation</p> <p>There are 2 types of mindfulness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Mindfulness</li> <li>• Trait (disposition) Mindfulness</li> </ul> <p>There are 3 types of meditation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concentrative</li> <li>• Mindfulness</li> <li>• Integrative</li> </ul> <p>There are also other different lines of Meditation, such as Christian Meditation, Vipassana Meditation, Anapatha Meditation, etc.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is your current job position as well as describe your job duties and daily tasks?</li> <li>2. Could you specify your meditation technique or the kind of meditation you are practicing?</li> <li>3. How long have you been practicing meditation?</li> <li>4. What was your initial motivation that brought you to mindfulness meditation?</li> <li>5. How often do you meditate and how long at a time?</li> </ol>
<p>Key work-related Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved Social Relationship</li> <li>• Retained Focusing Ability</li> <li>• Enhanced Productivity Performance (creativity, resilience, etc)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. What do you perceive to be the work-related benefits of mindfulness meditation? Please give me an example to illustrate your point.</li> </ol>
<p>"Seated meditation sessions and mindful moments during your day are the two pillars of Meditation".</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Please give me an example how have you applied meditation practice to your work?</li> </ol>

<p>Implementation of Mindfulness Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Advantages</li> <li>• The Disadvantages</li> <li>• Challenges, Questions and Controversies</li> </ul>	<p>8. What are the advantages of integrating mindfulness meditation in your daily work?</p> <p>9. What are the disadvantages of integrating mindfulness meditation in your daily work?</p>
<p>There has been wide array of mindfulness training programs in large corporations along with smaller companies such as Google, Intel, etc with the purpose of employee productivity.</p>	<p>10. Do your current company promote any kind of meditation program for the sake of employee development and productivity?</p> <p>-If yes, what is your opinion of the effectiveness, advantages, disadvantages and challenges of such program?</p> <p>-If no, would you like to have one? If yes, what would be your ideal mindfulness meditation program in your workplace in the future? What do you think will be the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of such meditation program?</p>
<p>Disadvantage: Since meditation generally helps employees to calm down, they may approach work in a more relaxing way and may think that they should not overburden themselves with work duties. Instead, they will tend to work less, spend more time with their families and have a longer rest.</p>	<p>11. What is your opinion of this statement?</p>

Disadvantage: Although mindfulness is acknowledged to be universally advantageous, people from culturally diverse backgrounds with dissimilar physicalities and mentalities may practice and be exposed to meditation differently.	12. Do you think your personal background, such as education, religion and family have any significant effects on your meditation technique and the way you reap benefits from it? Please explain your answer.
Disadvantage: Given the work-related benefits of meditation, some companies can become overreliant on the technique to reduce stress in employees. Indeed, there are also other ways to prevent employees from being subject to stress, such as re-organizing work and appropriate task delegation. They will be more effective in protecting the employee well-being in the first place than utilizing meditation program sessions as a quick fix later.	13. What is your opinion of this statement and please illustrate by one of your personal experiences.
Challenge: Mindfulness programs are likely to be sharply truncated in favor of complying with the time constraint of organizations and gaining attendance of CEOs, managers as well as employees.	14. What do you think is a proper time for one mindfulness session in a company?
Challenge: The benefits of mindfulness sessions have been noted to be more remarkable in the dynamic work environments in which employees have to intensively and constantly regulate their emotions than the repetitive job, for example, dealing with different customers, marketing, sale, etc.	15. What do you think about this statement? Please tell a personal story or work experience to justify your idea.

<p>Challenge: There are also existing stress management training programs, which specifically concentrate on relaxation, behavioral, cognitive techniques and have proven successful in decreasing distress and depression at work. Although such relaxation programs yield similar results on reducing stress, mindfulness workplace intervention has distinctive impact on reducing wandering and contemplation, and therefore, boosts the quality of sleep and recuperation from work tension.</p>	<p>16. Are there any kinds of relaxation technique to reduce stress and increase productivity you prefer besides or as well as meditation at work, such as listening to music, doing yoga, exercising, going on retreat, etc? What are their results compared to the mindfulness training sessions (if it has been applied to your company) or your usual meditation practice (if it has been applied to your company)?</p>
<p>Challenge: Although companies try to integrate meditation sessions in their companies with the hope of boosting work productivity, there are other intervening factors influencing the job performance that cannot be fully controlled, such as the health status and daily routine of employees at work.</p>	<p>17. What is your opinion of this statement and please illustrate by one of your personal experiences.</p>

## B. Interview Questions for Non-Meditators

NON MEDITATORS - INTERVIEW QUESTION LIST	
<i>Theory/Existing Research Findings</i>	<i>Potential Interview Questions</i>



<p>A Conceptual Overview of Mindfulness Meditation</p> <p>Contrasting Conceptualizations of Mindfulness Meditation</p> <p>There are 2 types of mindfulness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Mindfulness</li> <li>• Trait (disposition) Mindfulness</li> </ul> <p>There are 3 types of meditation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concentrative</li> <li>• Mindfulness</li> <li>• Integrative</li> </ul> <p>There are also other different lines of Meditation, such as Christian Meditation, Vipassana Meditation, Anapatha Meditation, etc.</p>	<p>1) What is your current job position as well as describe your job duties and daily tasks</p> <p>2) What pops up in your mind when first heard of the term “meditation” or “mindfulness”? Since when have you heard of this practice?</p> <p>3) Please tell me some commonplace methods you use to relax after a hard day at work, such as watching TV, listening to music, doing yoga or cooking.</p>
<p>Implementation of Mindfulness Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Advantages</li> <li>• The Disadvantages</li> <li>• Challenges, Questions and Controversies</li> </ul>	<p>4) What do you think are the advantages of having those relaxation methods to reduce stress from your daily work?</p> <p>5) What do you think are the disadvantages of having those relaxation methods to reduce stress from your daily work?</p>
<p>Key work-related Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved Social Relationship</li> <li>• Retained Focusing Ability</li> <li>• Enhanced Productivity Performance (creativity, resilience, etc)</li> </ul>	<p>6) What does mindfulness meditation mean to you?</p> <p>7) How do you think mindfulness meditation may either benefit or have potential adverse effect on your work productivity if you take up the practice?</p>
<p>There has been wide array of mindfulness training programs in large</p>	<p>8) Do your current company promote any kind of meditation program for</p>

<p>corporations along with smaller companies such as Google, Intel, etc with the purpose of employee productivity.</p>	<p>the sake of employee development and productivity?</p> <p>-If yes, what is your opinion of the effectiveness of such program?</p> <p>-If no, would you like to have one? If yes, what would be your ideal mindfulness meditation program in your workplace in the future?</p>
<p>Disadvantage: Although mindfulness is acknowledged to be universally advantageous, people from culturally diverse backgrounds with dissimilar physicalities and mentalities may practice and be exposed to meditation differently.</p>	<p>9) Do you think your personal background, such as education, religion and family have any significant effects on the fact that you do not practice meditation? Please explain.</p>
<p>Disadvantage: Since meditation generally helps employees to calm down, they may approach work in a more relaxing way and may think that they should not overburden themselves with work duties. Instead, they will tend to work less, spend more time with their families and have a longer rest.</p>	<p>10)What is your opinion of this statement?</p>
<p>Disadvantage: Given the work-related benefits of meditation, some companies can become overreliant on the technique to reduce stress in employees. Indeed, there are also other ways to prevent employees from being subject to stress, such as re-organizing work and appropriate task delegation. They will be</p>	<p>11)What is your opinion of this statement and please illustrate by one of your personal experiences.</p>

more effective in protecting the employee well-being in the first place than utilizing meditation program sessions as a quick fix later.	
Challenge: Mindfulness programs are likely to be sharply truncated in favor of complying with the time constraint of organizations and gaining attendance of CEOs, managers as well as employees.	12)What do you think is a proper time for one mindfulness session in a company?
Challenge: There are also existing stress management training programs, which specifically concentrate on relaxation, behavioral, cognitive techniques and have proven successful in decreasing distress and depression at work. Although such relaxation programs yield similar results on reducing stress, mindfulness workplace intervention has distinctive impact on reducing wandering and contemplation, and therefore, boosts the quality of sleep and recuperation from work tension.	13)What are your relaxation methods results compared to the mindfulness training sessions (if it has been applied to your company) in terms of both advantages and disadvantages?
Challenge: Although companies try to integrate meditation sessions in their companies with the hope of boosting work productivity, there are other intervening factors influencing the job performance that cannot be fully controlled, such as the health status and daily routine of employees at work.	14)What is your opinion of this statement and please illustrate by one of your personal experiences.
Challenge: People may tend to think of using sedatives, going on company retreats or vacations and doing yoga as	15)What is your opinion of this statement and please illustrate by one of your personal experiences.

alternative panaceas for stress and depression in the workplace. Indeed, when employees are first introduced to meditation, they will likely perceive the session of “sitting still” to be boring and thus, useless for stress reduction.	
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### **C. Orienting Statements**

Before the interview:

- Thank you for accepting the interview invitation
- Ask permission to record with iPhone 6S for the sake of later process of transcribing
- Announce that all the informations and names of the interviewees will be anonymous in favor of protecting the respondent confidentiality
- For Vietnamese interviewees: Although the interview is preferably conducted in English for the sake of analyzing, please feel free to use Vietnamese whenever you feel the need to do so, and I will translate them later on)
- 

After the interview:

- Thank you again for the interview.
- I wish you health, peace and happiness in your working
- Would you like to see the transcript?
- Would you like to have a copy of my thesis when it's available?

Here is my email: [tuc.nguyen@aalto.fi](mailto:tuc.nguyen@aalto.fi) in case you need to contact me later.

## **D. A Sample Page of Transcription**

**Interviewer:** *Since meditation generally helps employees to calm down, they may approach work in a more relaxing way and may think that they should not overburden themselves with work duties. Instead, they will tend to work less, spend more time with their families and have a longer rest. What is your opinion of this statement?*

**Participant 11:** I think it's very difficult to generalize. I think that probably true for a lot of people. But I don't think that you can see it as everybody. I think that there is a lot to do with personality and well-being. I certainly have a colleague who has a very many excellent sort of meditation and mindfulness activities with still work hard.

I think in general what you say is true, but I think it really depends on individual.

**Interviewer:** *Although mindfulness is acknowledged to be universally advantageous, people from culturally diverse backgrounds with dissimilar physicalities and mentalities may practice and be exposed to meditation differently. Do you think your personal background, such as education, religion and family have any significant effects on the fact that you do not practice meditation? Please explain.*

**Participant 11:** No, I don't think so. meditate, they are likely to be exposed to it, they're likely to know about it, but I don't think that really impacts on why I don't meditate. If I know about, I could choose to use or to take classes or join the group or something like that.

**Interviewer:** *Given the work-related benefits of meditation, some companies can become overreliant on the technique to reduce stress in employees. Indeed, there are also other ways to prevent employees from being subject to stress, such as re-organizing work and appropriate task delegation. They will be more effective in protecting the employee well-being in the first place than utilizing meditation program sessions as a quick fix later. What is your opinion of this statement and please illustrate by one of your personal experiences.*

**Participant 11:** That's quite similar to what I was thinking then. I think that It's very important to identify causes of stress and know what to eliminate them. It's not necessarily just about reorganizing work or prioritizing. I think it's about being aware of what individual person's strength are, and maybe find the main difficult thing to do. I think it's a very complex issue perhaps. I think it's a very complex issue. Meditation can be very very useful, but organization would see it as being an easy way to fix [problem].

